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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, September 19, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 19, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

● (1105)

[English]

VACANCY

TORONTO—DANFORTH

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation in the House of Commons for the electoral district of Toronto—Danforth, in the province of Ontario, by reason of the passing of the hon. Jack Layton.

Pursuant to subsection 28(1) of the Parliament of Canada Act, on Friday, August 26, 2011, I addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill the vacancy.

[Translation]

I understand that there have been discussions among representatives of all the parties in the House to allow certain members to commemorate and pay tribute to our colleague.

* * *

[English]

HON. JACK LAYTON

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the House beside an empty chair. In it sat a great Canadian, a great leader and a great parliamentarian.

In this chair sat a friend, and I know that many hon. members on both sides of this esteemed House called him the same.

[Translation]

This House of Commons and this country have suffered an incredible loss, and it is with great sadness that we begin this new parliamentary session by paying tribute to the very hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, Jack Layton.

I know that all members join me in offering our sincere condolences to the family of our late colleague: to his wife and soulmate, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina; to his mother Doris; to his brothers and sisters, Bob, David and Nancy; to his son Michael, his daughter Sarah and his granddaughter Beatrice, a mere mention of whom would bring a sparkle to the eyes of the hon.

member for Toronto—Danforth. I want to let each of them know that they will always have our love and endless support.

[English]

I believe that the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, Jack Layton's own member of Parliament, deserves particular recognition by the House today for her courage, grace and composure in these most difficult times. She has my utmost admiration and love.

[Translation]

Last week, Jack Layton's family presented me with two eagle feathers. These were feathers that he kept in his office and that were sacred to him. He often held these feathers when he had to make important decisions. They reminded him to think of the people and nature around him and to think about the impact our decisions will have on future generations.

These feathers were given to me as leader of the New Democratic Party so that Jack Layton's spirit and the wisdom that guided him may also guide our party. When I accepted these feathers, I made a commitment to his family, as I am now making a commitment to all Canadians, to always follow the path that he set out for us.

[English]

Rarely, if ever, has the House seen as passionate, tireless and committed an advocate for the less fortunate as Jack Layton. Day after day he fought for the little guy. He strove to give a voice to those without power and wealth and to ensure that as this country moved forward no one was left behind or found himself or herself homeless. In his memory, we will carry on this work.

All who knew him knew the strength of his belief that young people held the key to the gates of a better Canada and a better world. He worked tirelessly to reach out to young people, to engage them in politics and to ensure their perspectives and their best hopes for our country were reflected in our national dialogue. In Jack Layton's memory, we will carry on this work.

[Translation]

He was also just as determined to ensure that all new Canadians receive a warm welcome in our country and to build better relationships with our first nations communities, relationships based on respect. In Jack Layton's memory, we will carry on this work.

Tributes

The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth was motivated by an unwavering belief that, by respecting the hopes and dreams of the residents of his province of birth and by focusing the debate on what unites the people of this country and what we can accomplish when we all work together, we could build a stronger and more united country with the help of Quebeckers.

His faith in this principle remained unshaken, despite the cynicism that has crept into federal politics over the past 20 years. In Jack's memory, we will carry on this work.

Jack was motivated by the goal of leaving our children and grandchildren a greener world; a world free from climate change; a world with clean land, clean rivers and fresh air; a world where people interact with nature in a sustainable manner. In Jack's memory, we will carry on this work.

● (1110)

[English]

Jack Layton believed so much in the power of democracy and of this Parliament. I invite all hon. members of this House to join with me in picking up his torch and making this an institution of which Canadians can be proud.

Jack Layton improved the tone of the debate in Parliament. He firmly believed we could have passionate disagreements without being disrespectful or disgraceful to each other. Let us all honour his memory by conducting the next session of Parliament in this spirit. Let us always put the interests of Canadians before our own partisan interests, as Jack Layton would want us to do.

Never was Jack more proud than when he was able to work with others across the aisle to serve Canadian families. He considered his work with his Liberal colleagues to pass a better balanced budget one of his greatest legislative legacies. He was equally proud of his work with the members opposite in securing help for more than 90,000 out-of-work families in their time of need and in making the apology for residential schools a reality. By his own words, Jack Layton was always more interested in proposition than opposition.

Let this spirit live within each of us as we get down to work for Canadians in these very tough times.

[Translation]

Canadians' response to Jack Layton's death demonstrated the great love they had for him. In Montreal, where he was born, in Toronto, where he lived, here in Ottawa and all across the country, Canadians gathered to celebrate his life.

The stories they shared and the messages they wrote in chalk on the pavement all had a common theme, and that theme was hope. Hope that it is possible to build a better Canada. Hope that, by working together, we can face the challenges before us. Hope that it is possible to build a stronger and more united country. Hope that, although none of us is perfect, together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

I hope that this will be Jack Layton's greatest legacy and that we will all commit to making his vision a reality.

[English]

There is a code which has been inscribed into the hearts of many Canadians. I would like to have it inscribed into our official records today. Let it be a motto for this country and for this esteemed House now and forevermore.

My friends, love is better than anger, hope is better than fear, optimism is better than despair; so let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic and we will change the world.

● (1115)

[Translation]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late leader of the official opposition. I do so as Prime Minister, as leader of my party and as a member of the House, in memory of our friend and colleague, the hon. Jack Layton.

[English]

One of the pleasures of serving in this place is the friendships that develop and sometimes the surprise of friendships that grow between opponents, the affections that develop in spite of our strongest partisan instincts. In the case of Jack Layton, I believe that all of us developed this affection inexorably. His passion, perseverance and ability to be at once tough and cheerful would eventually win over even those who most strongly disagreed with him.

[Translation]

The affection and respect we had for him were rooted in his ability to mobilize others and unite them around a single cause. It was that part of his personality that made him a true leader. And the courage, dignity and optimism we witnessed during his battle with cancer only served to increase our fondness and respect. Those feelings grow even stronger when we consider the rigours of an election campaign—which I know all too well—and when we think about what he accomplished during the 2011 election.

[English]

I cannot think of another leader, at least not in our time, whose campaign was described as gallant. However, Jack's campaign inspired and merited that description. So too did his approach to his high parliamentary office. His commitment as leader of the other side to pursue more civil discourse in the House and to seek a constructive approach to opposition won well-deserved praise from all Canadians.

Of course it did not detract in any way from his ability to forcefully advocate a different position from that of the government. Hon. members will recall such a great parliamentary battle at the end of the spring session. As I have said before, I remember at one point near the end crossing to sit with Jack in the midst of it to discuss a few things, some political, some personal. Really, that was not very long ago. Now, when I look across the floor, it is hard to believe he is not still there.

However, I will always remember that conversation because, notwithstanding the personal challenges in front of Jack and regardless of the personal combat going on between us, as always, he was still full of optimism and goodwill.

[Translation]

His admirable personality made him a shining example. The civility he brought to debate as Leader of the Opposition and his sincere commitment to proposing constructive solutions set the bar high for us here in the House in terms of the work we do for Canadians.

[English]

It is well known that Jack and I did not always agree. In fact, it might be said that we did not often agree. However, he loved this country and devoted himself to the well-being of its people. In this, we were united, as indeed are so many men and women of different and contradictory political persuasions. In the heat of our debates we too often forget that people of goodwill share the deepest motivations and the highest aspirations. We differ only on how we believe we should act on these in order to address the practical problems that lie before us.

● (1120)

[Translation]

Our democracy and our work in the House exist so that we can take stock of all potential solutions and decide which path to take. Through his election victory, Jack Layton contributed to the renewal and strengthening of Canada's political life.

[English]

I conclude my remarks by also offering, for myself and on behalf of my colleagues, a special word of encouragement for the hon. member who was Jack's partner in life as well as in politics. She, too, has won our affection and our respect. In recent weeks she, too, has displayed the courage and dignity which we can only hope would emerge in us were we to suffer such a loss.

[Translation]

To her, the family and Jack's caucus colleagues, we offer our deepest sympathies and we, along with them, celebrate a truly extraordinary life.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little personally about Jack. He was a person I came to know over many years through my long-time association with the New Democratic Party and my leadership of the provincial party in Ontario.

My first conversation with Jack was on the telephone asking him to support me in my bid for the leadership which, for my colleagues opposite, he declined to provide me at that particular moment. Perhaps he guessed something that even I was not aware of at the time.

In the course of the last few months, the last two months in particular, as a country we have gone through a political celebration in the midst of great sorrow and great loss. I am sure there have been parallels in time when this has occurred. We are told that when D'Arcy McGee was assassinated, only a few hundred yards from this spot, over 100,000 people attended his funeral service, lining the streets.

Tributes

As Canadians, we can say that in the course of our history there have been moments when we have surpassed partisanship and have come together.

[Translation]

There are times in our lives when we must admit the partisan reality of our political lives. Political life is a decent life. It is a public life that has earned the respect of Canadians, even though not everyone will completely agree with the positions taken by a political leader like Mr. Layton.

[English]

Jack believed fiercely in the country and he wanted to take a positive and constructive attitude to achieving what he needed to achieve, but Jack was a very tough partisan. He was a very committed member of the New Democratic Party. He was also someone who, as the Prime Minister has said and as the Leader of the Opposition has said, because of his personality, because of what Laurier once described as the importance of having sunny ways, he managed to attract the support and the affection of a great many people who did not necessarily share his point of view.

Particularly the outpouring we saw in Toronto was a reflection of the fact that Mr. Layton started out his life and his career as a local politician. He was very proud of his work in the city of Toronto and he provided leadership that was of a unique nature. While there are political parties, more or less, at the city level, in order to get things done people have to work together. It is not a deeply partisan framework in which they work. They work by talking, by engaging, by trying to find compromise, and that is where Jack excelled. He loved to make a deal and to do a deal even when, as some of us discovered there was no deal to be done, he still wanted to try to get it done. I think we all respected that spirit.

When I think of the work he did on housing, and as premier I worked very closely with Jack on that issue, he really did provide leadership, not only for the city but for the province and then for the country. I think of the work that he did on AIDS. I think of his advocacy for the gay, lesbian and transgender community, which he continued to do right up to the end. I think of the courage he displayed on a number of issues where not everyone was with him at the time, but eventually more people came to see the merits of that position.

We have lost a colleague and a friend. The country has lost an important political leader, an important political presence, and my colleague from Trinity—Spadina has lost a husband and a partner. We offer her our warmest condolences. She has shown great courage and above all great natural dignity in the face of Jack's struggle and in the face of all the attention to which that has given rise. From this side of the House, and for some years Jack occupied seats not too far away from where we stand today, as an adversary and as a friend we shall miss him.

Tributes

I cannot help but recall the famous words of the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas, when he said in his famous poem, "death shall have no dominion". He was really describing in that poem, and I think this has been the experience of Canada over the last little while, that while Jack has passed away, the things he stood for, the values he had and the warmth, strength and quality of his personality will never die or disappear because the spirit and the soul with which we come into life will carry on, and I think all of us of different religious beliefs strongly believe that. That spirit carries on in our children. It carries on in the work that we all decide to do, whether we come at it from the same perspective or from the same philosophy. There are a great many Canadians who, over the last while, have thought more about politics, about public life and about what that public contribution is all about because of the life that Jack chose to live, the way in which he chose to live it and the way in which he chose to leave it.

• (1125)

I close with the words of Dylan Thomas:

Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were deeply saddened this summer to learn of the passing of the leader of the New Democratic Party, Jack Layton, after a hard-fought battle with cancer.

We were all impressed by the strength of character and determination Jack Layton showed throughout his battle against the disease. The fact that he found the strength to run an election campaign, despite his illness, to defend his values and promote his ideals exemplifies his courage.

Jack Layton was a passionate and honest parliamentarian. He was also approachable and easy to be around on a daily basis. We especially appreciated his dedication to the homelessness issue and how he promoted workers' rights, battles that we fought by his side here in the House of Commons.

Jack Layton's unwavering commitment to ordinary people is undoubtedly one of the biggest contributors to his immense popularity. That is also what made him an example to anyone who works in politics.

He was a principled man, a man who was courteous and respectful of his adversaries, and also extremely competent and effective. He was also a man of ideas. He brought a number of initiatives to this chamber, in order, as he often said, to do politics differently. As an expert negotiator, he was willing to make compromises to advance matters that were important to him. One of his guiding principles was that taking a small step towards achieving his objectives was better than stubbornly wanting to accomplish everything all at once.

And how he battled in the House of Commons! I will always remember one very intense day, to say the least, in this chamber. During question period, he used his oratorical skills to put a minister

on the defensive, to an extent we have rarely seen in this House. That evening, at a cocktail party, I greeted the minister in question, and remarked that it had not been an easy day and that Jack had been in fine form. The minister replied that there was something special about that man. Even though he had been lambasted, the minister still wanted to shake Jack's hand when leaving the House.

That was Jack: he fervently defended his ideals, respected his adversaries and earned their respect. That is a feat not easily achieved, but Jack knew the secret.

I also remember that when I arrived in the lobby of the House after his great victory of May 2, Jack came over to me to ask about my colleagues who had been defeated. There was no hint of arrogance, just kindness and compassion.

Farewell Jack, the exceptional human being; farewell Jack, the dedicated and attentive MP; farewell Jack, the talented and effective party leader. Thank you for contributing so much to the development of our democracy. Thank you for all the memorable moments in this House of Commons.

In closing, on behalf of Bloc Québécois MPs and party members, I would like to offer my most sincere condolences to his wife, Olivia, his children, and all his family, friends and colleagues.

The great French writer Alexandre Dumas once said that those we have loved and lost are not where they used to be, but they are with us always wherever we may be.

Farewell, Jack.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise, as other leaders have risen, with a great deal of sadness. I also knew Jack for a very long time and this has been a very rough summer for so many of us.

• (1135)

[Translation]

I want to offer my sincere condolences to everyone in Jack's caucus and to his wife, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina in particular. She is an extraordinary woman with unparalleled courage.

[English]

I also recognize that many of us last saw each other, not in this place, but in Roy Thomson Hall for the state funeral. I would like to particularly thank the right hon. Prime Minister for his generosity in deciding to give us that opportunity collectively to mourn the loss of a great Canadian.

It was, in the best sense of the word, less a funeral than a true celebration of life. Celebrating together, I think we experienced, as partisans, a moment of our true shared humanity. We experienced together what it means to lose a friend and a colleague. We also saw, and we must always remember, that at the heart of everything we are all Canadians and we all love this country and we would do better to remember it.

Tributes

We are all, in the end, human. We share the commonality that we are all born, we all die and that the measure of our lives is what we do with the time in between, no matter how short it might be. Jack did a lot in his time. Some of us die in ways that are almost anonymous, as the vigil outside and the walk for justice remind us of the aboriginal women. However, Jack died at the height of his powers. Jack died at the moment he had achieved something so long sought after that our hearts broke for that loss. He worked so hard. He faced, as many colleagues have mentioned, an election campaign, which is always gruelling, at a time that he was also fighting a serious illness, more serious than many of us knew.

That speaks to other words from that same Welsh poet, quoted by my friend, the leader of the Liberal Party. It was Dylan Thomas who talked about how we face death and how we must not give into it, how we must not go gentle. Jack Layton fought harder than anyone I have ever seen. He put more into that last gasp, that last effort, to take his party to where he knew he could lead it. He gave so much of himself.

I will also close with the words of Dylan Thomas who wrote:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

It was in dying that I think Jack most clearly saw and then seized that light.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank you and all members of the House for this opportunity to respond to the remarkable tributes to the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

[Translation]

I want to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart.

[English]

I will take this opportunity to express both my gratitude and my renewed resolve first to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and Canada's New Democrats. I wish to express my gratitude for her faith and trust in assuming stewardship of our party at this crucial time. I thank her for her support and friendship and, most of all, for her leadership.

I wish to convey my heartfelt gratitude to the Prime Minister for the honour he showed, not just to my family and New Democrats, but all Canadians, by declaring a state funeral.

I thank both the Prime Minister and Laureen Harper for the comfort and support they provided to me and my family, both publicly and privately. I thank him for his eloquent tribute in the House today.

I thank all other leaders for their thoughtful tributes.

I also wish to thank members of the House of all parties who have been so supportive and who have passed on condolences from their constituents in every part of this country.

The generosity of Canadians has been a source of great strength for me and for our family in these past weeks. Among the condolences, our family has heard from so many other brave and courageous people who have been living with cancer or who have lost loved ones to the disease. Like them, and like millions of

generous Canadians, I am resolved to carry forward with hope and continue fighting this disease until there is a cure.

As I was doing the Terry Fox Run yesterday, I was filled with optimism that with tens of thousands of Canadians participating together we can outrun cancer.

I have been overwhelmed in the past weeks and days by so many inspiring messages everywhere, in condolence books, in cards and tributes, in letters to the editor, in emails, in blogs and twitters, and, for me, most memorably in chalk at Toronto's City Hall where both Jack and I served on council.

I have been overwhelmed with messages from youth and children, women, immigrants, our first nations, Québécois, maritimers, westerners and Ontarians, so many messages that were inspired by Jack Layton and his message of hope, optimism and love, and so many messages that he himself would have been inspired by, especially those from youth, especially the ones who looked beyond the grief and saw the possibility of moving forward and building a better Canada and a better world.

The chalk at city hall has washed away but those messages will be with me forever. They are part of my renewed resolve, my resolve to continue and build on Jack's legacy, a resolve built on values that were the guiding light for Jack Layton, values shared by so many in the House and across the country of fundamental Canadian values of generosity, justice and equality.

Of course, it was easy for us to be hopeful and optimistic when Jack was around. The tough part is now. What makes it easier for me, what makes it even possible, is that so many people have understood the message and been inspired. What makes it possible is that so many are prepared to give politics and politicians a chance again, and they will be watching us as we move Canada forward.

What makes it possible is the knowledge that the House of Commons, which was so important to Jack, is more representative of Canada and its diversity than ever before, and that is, in large part, due to his leadership and his unending quest for equality and justice; for giving a voice to the voiceless, to the people who thought they were on the margins; for empowering people who thought they had no power; for remembering that all of us who have the privilege to serve in the House are empowered by those very people we serve; and for remembering that together we have power to make positive changes that will benefit all Canadians.

● (1140)

We do have that power. I am resolved to move forward to help make the dreams that Jack and I shared for 30 years a reality for future generations.

[Translation]

It is possible. It is still possible.

Government Orders

[English]

We saw evidence today of our shared humanity. We heard words rarely spoken in the House of hope, optimism and love. That suggests a better Canada is possible. It is possible to move Canada forward and make Canada a better and more prosperous place where no one is left behind.

● (1145)

[Translation]

My friends, let us work together.

[English]

And do not let them tell you that it cannot be done.

The Speaker: The loss of Jack Layton leaves our Parliament missing much more than just one member.

[Translation]

We all know that Jack had deep partisan convictions, as every member of this House does, but he truly wanted Parliament to work for Canadians.

[English]

Here in the House, Jack's voice was a tireless voice. He was a worth adversary, an inspiring leader, a kind heart and a loyal friend.

I now invite all hon. members to stand and observe a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my job to launch with the pedestrian business of the House. I am doing that with a motion to deal with the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. It is a motion that I believe has the support of all the parties. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, on Thursday, September 22, 2011, the House shall meet at 10 a.m. and proceed to government orders; at 11 a.m. members may make statements pursuant to Standing Order 31; not later than 11:15 a.m. oral questions shall be taken up; at noon, the House shall proceed to the ordinary daily routine of business, followed by government orders, at 2:30 p.m. the House shall stand adjourned to the next sitting day;

that the Address of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to be delivered in the Chamber of the House of Commons at 5:30 p.m. that day before Members of the Senate and the House of Commons, together with all introductory and related remarks, be printed as an appendix to the House of Commons *Debates* for that day and form part of the records of this House; and

that the media recording and transmission of such address, introductory and related remarks be authorized pursuant to established guidelines for such occasions.

The Speaker: Does the hon. Government House Leader have the unanimous consent to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed

(Motion agreed to)

● (1150)

[English]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed from June 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): We are resuming debate. When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis was speaking. He has 12 minutes remaining in his presentation, which will be followed by 10 minutes of questions and answers.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Lac—Saint-Louis.

[English]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to pick up where things left off in June. Right before the long debate on back-to-work legislation I had the opportunity to speak to this bill for eight minutes. At that point I was making three general observations.

The first is that refugees are not queue jumpers. There is a misconception across the land that when refugees come to Canada and claim refugee status, they are depriving others who would like to come to Canada of their right to do so. I say sadly that it is the government that has actually fostered this notion. Do not take my word for it; I will quote from an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* which stated the following:

Back in 2010, [the] Public Safety Minister...said the government needed to crack down on human smuggling because "we know that jumping the immigration queue is fundamentally unfair to those who follow the rules and wait their turns to come to Canada."

This is the opposite of what is true about refugees.

Of course, no one likes queue jumpers. We all have a natural aversion to the idea of someone cutting into line. However, refugees are not queue jumpers. By letting a refugee into Canada, we are not slowing down or otherwise causing a regular immigration application to be sidelined. It is very important to make that point.

The second point I would like to make is related to the first point. There is a process for determining who is a legitimate refugee and who is a person whose claim is without proper merit. That process goes back at least 20 years, if I am not mistaken, or maybe a little less than 20 years. We know that that process is embodied in an institution of government that we call the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Government Orders

The third point I would like to make is related to the first two. The reason there is a refugee crisis in this country, the reason there is a backlog of refugee claimants, has a lot to do with the way the government, unfortunately, has undermined the refugee determination process that is embodied in the Immigration and Refugee Board.

We all know that the government failed to fill vacancies on the Immigration and Refugee Board for quite a long time, to the extent that the lack of desire to move in terms of appointing new members to the IRB was having an impact and creating the backlog in refugee claims. In fact, the Auditor General in 2009 expressed her concerns about timely and efficient appointments and reappointments to the IRB when she looked at the matter of the refugee backlog.

What has happened is the government has politicized the process of appointing people to the IRB which has made the backlog even worse.

● (1155)

It is very important that the government own up to this. First, it must admit that refugees are not queue jumpers. Second, it must admit that it has made the problem of the refugee backlog slightly worse because it failed previously to act quickly in terms of appointing members to the board.

There are problems with this bill. It creates two classes of refugees. One class would be the regular refugee stream. The second class would be denoted by the minister as designated arrivals, which, upon being designated accordingly, would be treated differently. They could be held in detention for up to 12 months.

What is really happening is the government is categorizing refugees. It is creating classes of refugees for different treatment based on, if we really look at it and read between the lines, the mode of transport the refugee claimants have used to get here. Refugees who come by plane typically would not come in big groups and would not receive the ministerial designation of designated foreign nationals and would not receive the different treatment that is being reserved for designated foreign nationals in this bill. Refugees who come in groups who will be designated as designated foreign nationals under the act typically will come by ship in squalid conditions. If they come by plane, they are not considered to be designated foreign nationals under the law.

The government is creating different classes of refugees based on how the refugees come to Canada. Following that logic, there should be a class of refugees for those arriving by minivan. It is very unhealthy when we start to distinguish and create categories of people from what is essentially a group of people with the same characteristics, people who are fleeing persecution or misery for a better life.

This brings me to another point. Back in June when I first spoke to this bill, I said that the government seems to make legislation based on the latest headlines. Instead of analyzing a situation over the long term and coming up with a solution that has some merit, it will react very quickly to news, especially before an election. It will bring in rushed legislation which obviously will have flaws because any legislation that is rushed will have flaws. It will bring in legislation to try to show the public that it is acting quickly to solve a problem,

which sometimes is very complex and requires more reflection than it is receiving.

When the government introduced Bill C-49, which is now Bill C-4, it had already brought in Bill C-11 about a year before. Bill C-11 was meant to attack the problem of the growing refugee backlog the government itself had contributed to making worse. Under Bill C-11, the government implemented something that had been created by a Liberal government. It brought in a refugee appeal division to speed up the process whereby when a claimant is refused by the IRB, he or she may appeal to the Federal Court. The government said it would implement something that a Liberal government came up with, which was the refugee appeals division.

I should mention that has not yet been implemented, as far as I know. Bill C-11 tried to remedy this situation but there have been more delays in terms of creating the refugee appeal division. In any event, Bill C-11 was attempting to deal with the problem. We still do not know if Bill C-11 would deal effectively with the problem because the appeals division has not been created. Why did the government not let things be and allow Bill C-11 to work its way through to implementation to see if it was able to resolve the matter before introducing Bill C-4? That is quite indicative of the fact that the government prefers to rush into things, sometimes with measures that are half-baked or not called for.

● (1200)

A major problem with Bill C-4 is that it probably violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is what happens when legislation is rushed: we get legislation that is not thought through and is not properly put together. It means the legislation could be challenged and if it is challenged, it may be struck down. That would create more problems down the line. A government should really do things properly or it may find itself with problems down the line.

Bill C-4 possibly could violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because of the fact that a person may be kept in detention for up to 12 months. We have seen jurisprudence by the Supreme Court find that time far too long and in violation of at least two sections of the charter.

I will stop on that point and take the opportunity to move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

'this House declines to give 2nd reading to Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, since the bill fails to achieve its stated principle of cracking down on human smugglers and instead targets legitimate refugee claimants and refugees, and because it expands the Minister's discretion in a manner that is overly broad and not limited to the mass arrival situation that supposedly inspired the introduction of this legislation, and because it presents an imprisonment scheme that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protections against arbitrary detention and prompt review of detention, and because its provisions also violate international obligations relating to refugees and respecting the treatment of persons seeking protection.'

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my understanding that the amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

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● (1205)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis has moved an excellent amendment.

I wish to share that over the course of the summer holidays I had a brief conversation with the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism at the Calgary Stampede. I pointed out the same failing: the illogical focus on ships when most refugee claimants come to Canada by airplane. He said that he could, in his discretion as minister, designate it as an unusual entry by plane, bus, car, or any means. In other words, we could see this bill creep in and expose all refugee claimants, whether men, women or children, to a year of imprisonment.

I wonder if the member for Lac-Saint-Louis has any comments on that statement.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental problem with this bill is that it would make victims of people who in many cases are already victims in other countries.

We all get a little frustrated in traffic and do not like to be held up in it. When arriving home after a long trip from work or wherever we say that it was a hellish drive because we were stuck in traffic for an hour and a half. We should think about the person who agrees to pay a large sum of money to board an over-crowded boat to cross whatever sea or ocean to attempt to make a new life in a country like Canada. We should think how desperate they must be to go through all of those steps and all of that suffering. I do not think we should be targeting them as designated foreign arrivals and putting them in detention for 12 months.

Again, we are punishing the victim. I do not think it is very good public policy and I do not think that Canadians agree with that kind of public policy.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was rather intrigued by my friend's comments that somehow this bill creates categories of refugees.

I wonder if the member is aware that many of the boats that bring refugees are inherently unsafe. Does the member think that we should try to discourage unsafe passage to Canada?

I wonder if the member is aware that there are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people around the world, real legitimate refugees who have been waiting in very poor conditions in refugee camps and following the procedures that we set out with the UN to get them into Canada, who get pushed back to second place when we have unexpected arrivals and mass arrivals of large boatloads of people?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, indeed these boats are unsafe. This is really the point I was trying to make. Despite the fact that these are dangerous journeys, people are so desperate that they are willing to risk everything and risk their lives to make that journey.

The question is, why are they treated like criminals when they get here? These refugees are not the ringleaders. They are not the ones promising that they will be admitted to Canada if they pay a certain sum of money. These refugees are desperate and are willing to do anything.

What about someone being brought over who has no knowledge of the fact that the person who is organizing the trip is doing something illegal? For example, what about the dozens of Polish and Ukrainian welders allegedly spirited into Canada by the Alberta priest recently accused of running an immigration scam?

According to the media, if those charges are proven in court, by the minister's logic the welders should be detained and punished as part of a human smuggling scheme.

The wrong people are being targeted.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on a fine speech that sets out the myriad significant and profound problems with the bill before us.

We have heard that the bill is likely unconstitutional, not in one way but in a number of ways. We have heard that the bill, without any doubt whatsoever, violates international conventions and treaties to which Canada is signatory.

Perhaps most striking of all is what the Canadian public and groups that actually work with refugees have identified very clearly: that the bill will prove absolutely ineffective in targeting the real problem that we all agree is necessary to be targeted, the human smuggling. That is because the bill targets the attention on the refugees, not on the human smugglers.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would expand a little bit on whether or not he feels the bill is misdirected and misguided in targeting the penalties and myriad discriminatory practices on the refugees and not the smugglers themselves.

● (1210)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I really do think that is the problem.

The bill is responding sensationalistic images in the media of large numbers of people falling off the sides of a boat off the coast of British Columbia. That is what the bill is responding to.

The bill is trying to respond to an image that has been communicated through the media. The image itself is not reflective of what is going on. It is not reflective of the complexity of the situation.

I am just astounded by how the government, knowing the Supreme Court decision in the Charkaoui case, could go about creating such an arbitrary detention.

I will read from the legislative summary of the Library of Parliament for Bill C-4. This is not Liberal researchers writing this. This is from neutral, professional public servants. Page 8 of the legislative summary says:

The mandatory waiting periods before first and subsequent reviews of reasons for continued detention set out in Bill C-4 for "designated foreign nationals" could raise some Charter concerns. They mark a significant departure from the timelines in the existing immigration review regimes applicable to other persons detained under the IRPA.

It goes on and on.

The Supreme Court says:

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Whether through habeas corpus or statutory mechanisms, foreign nationals, like others, have a right to prompt review to ensure that their detention complies with the law.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one rather surprising aspect of the bill is the powers that would potentially be granted to the minister. One of the goals we set when introducing a bill is to make one clear rule that applies to everyone.

I want to thank my colleague for his speech because it illustrated to what extent this could become a problem. Can the hon. member elaborate on the discretionary power the minister would have?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right to raise this aspect of the bill. In a democracy we have to set parameters to ensure that no party, no government, no minister has unlimited power. That is the principle behind democracy. A democracy is more than just elections and votes, which are obviously necessary. It also takes parameters and structure to protect the public from excessive and absolute power. Accordingly, this aspect of the bill is problematic and just another reason we want to prevent this bill from moving forward.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and give a speech on what is a highly symbolic piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that will illustrate to Canadians the very clear differences in the approach to governing between the government and the official opposition.

Bill C-4 purports to deal with preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system, but in reality it is directed almost solely at refugee claimants who arrive in Canada utilizing whatever means are at their disposal. It is fair to say that it reflects a style of government that reacts quickly to exploit fear in our society, to take people's misery and exploit it for political purposes and to proceed with knee-jerk legislation that is not based on fact, not based on law, not based on reason and not based on fairness.

I am going to go through some of the major aspects of the bill so that Canadians can see exactly what the essence of the bill really is.

Bill C-4 would give the Minister of Immigration the power to designate, in his sole discretion, a group of refugees as "irregular arrivals". He could do that based on mere suspicion and based on the definition of a group that is not specified in the act, but presumably means any gathering of two or more people.

Once designated claimants receive that title, they are then subject to all kinds of special rules and, as we will hear during debate on the bill, discriminatory rules. I will start with some of them.

Once designated as irregular arrivals, designated claimants, including children, will be mandatorily detained on arrival or upon designation for up to one year. There will be no review of their detention by the Immigration and Refugee Board for one year. Release will only be possible if they are found to be refugees, if the IRB orders their release at the expiry of a year, or if the minister decides that there are exceptional circumstances. Mandatory conditions set out in the regulations will be imposed on all designated claimants released from detention, subjecting these

people to special conditions that do not apply to any other refugee claimant.

Designated arrivals will have their right to apply for permanent residency suspended. Under this legislation a designated claimant will be prohibited from applying for permanent residency for five years. If the person fails to comply with any of the conditions or reporting requirements, that five-year suspension can be extended to six years.

To show how arbitrary and ill thought out the legislation is, the five-year ban on applying for permanent residency applies even to someone who is found to be a legitimate refugee. Someone who comes here could be designated, satisfy the IRB within a year or two that he or she is a bona fide legitimate refugee, and still be prohibited from applying for permanent residency for five years.

A designated person cannot make a humanitarian and compassionate application or apply for a temporary resident permit for five years.

In terms of refugee travel documents, a designated person cannot receive travel documents. This means that designated refugees cannot travel outside of Canada for at least five years after they have been accepted as a refugee.

If we take these three things together, they mean that a designated refugee claimant, even if he or she is a legitimate, bona fide legal refugee, will be separated from his or her family for at least five years. He or she cannot travel to see family for at least five years. That is how Canada, under the Conservative government's legislation, is purporting to treat a bona fide refugee.

The legislation contains retroactive provisions so that the minister can make a retroactive designation for arrivals in Canada since March 31, 2009. Again, it has not been common in Canadian legislatures or in this Parliament to reach back in time and render illegal something that was legal at the time, but the Conservative government wants to do that in this case.

●(1215)

Bill C-4 is deeply unfair to refugees. It fails to honour obligations under Canadian and international law. It deprives individual cases from the independent review that justice requires. It would involve huge costs and unnecessary detention. Perhaps most pressing of all, Bill C-4 would do nothing to prevent human smuggling. The bill is unclear, arbitrary, discriminatory and ineffective.

More laws directed at refugees will not catch human smugglers who are overseas. Mandatory minimum sentences will not deter human smugglers who are overseas. Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, smuggling is already punishable by life imprisonment and mandatory minimums have been shown not to work as deterrents. Refugees know little or nothing about the laws before they arrive in the country of asylum and, even if they know, desperate fear for their lives often forces them to do whatever they must to flee persecution.

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Australia recently tried a very similar regime to punish refugees to try to deter them. It did not work there and there is no reason to think it would work here.

I will go through some of the major problems with the bill. Bill C-4 punishes refugees. The bill has been presented as legislation targeting smugglers but most of the provisions punish not smugglers, but the refugees themselves. I have already said that refugees, including children, would be mandatorily detained for a year without the possibility of an independent review. Under Bill C-4, refugees would be victimized three times: first, by their persecutors; second, by their smugglers; and finally, by Canada.

Bill C-4 violates the charter and our international human rights obligations, including the convention related to the status of refugees, commonly known as the Refugee Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Bill C-4 is discriminatory and it would create two classes of refugees with one class, those designated based on their mode of arrival, treated worse than the other. This again is discriminatory and contrary to the charter.

Once again, the measures imposing arbitrary detention are not only likely to be unconstitutional, they have already been found to be unconstitutional. In security certificate cases, the Supreme Court of Canada has already found that mandatory detention without review violates numerous sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Bill C-4 denies the right to equal access to justice. The bill denies designated persons the right to appeal a negative refugee decision to the Immigration and Refugee Board's Refugee Appeal Division. An appeal is a fundamental safeguard in refugee decision making where a person's life and liberty may be at stake. By eliminating the opportunity to correct errors at the first level, the bill would put Canada at risk of violating its most fundamental obligation toward refugees, which is not to send them back to persecution.

I have talked about how Bill C-4 blocks family reunification, which has been described by the government as its key objective. The bill deprives some refugees of the right for five years to apply for permanent residence and, therefore, reunification of families, including their children. This is a violation of the right to family life guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The bill also prevents consideration of the best interests of the child. The bill denies designated persons, including children, the opportunity for five years to make an application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. This application is often the only avenue for consideration of best interests of the child under refugee law. Under the terms of the bill, however, children could be deported from Canada without consideration of their best interests, again in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I would like to focus on Australia's example because it is instructive to the House. Australia had policies to lock up refugee claimants long-term and to deny them permanent status even when granted refugee status in an attempt to stop refugees coming to that country by boat. It is exactly what is happening here. The policies

resulted in refugees, including many children, being traumatized by their experiences in detention.

● (1220)

The Australian Human Rights Commission, an organization created by the Australian parliament, conducted a national inquiry into children in immigration detention and found that children in Australian immigration detention centres had suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights.

Far from deterring people, depriving refugees of the right to family reunification appears to have caused some people to arrive by boat, later bringing the wives and children of refugees in Australia who were unable to bring their families through legal channels. This was a deeply divisive policy, with many people in Australia unclear as to what was the best approach. However, we do know that in the past three years Australia has moved away from its policies of detention and temporary status for refugees.

I want to chat a bit about history because there is the old adage that those of us who forget history are doomed to repeat it. Canada's history with respect to immigration and refugees is not perfect. The Chinese head tax and the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War are both relative and old discredited philosophies, sadly, of our past. Another event from our undistinguished past is the Canadian government's refusal to admit a boat load of Jewish people fleeing Hitler's Germany, a refusal that forced the MS *St. Louis* back to Europe where many of the passengers perished in the Holocaust.

The individuals on that boat were not Canadian citizens or even permanent residents. However, many Canadians feel, and the Minister of Immigration himself has expressed, a sense of responsibility for the passengers on the *St. Louis* and a fundamental ethical obligation to help people in desperate situations fleeing for their lives.

In the minister's words at the unveiling of the monument to commemorate the MS *St. Louis* just this year, the monument was described as a "concrete perpetual expression of regret". The minister went on to remind us that we must learn from the lessons of history in order to apply them in the future, and said:

Canada will never close its doors to legitimate refugees who need our protection and who are fleeing persecution.

The official opposition agrees with that sentiment. That is the reason we will profoundly oppose this bill until the many problems are cleared. Otherwise, history will continue to judge Canada on the way we treat victims of international crisis. It is a bill that creates two tiers of refugees, violates our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and violates Canada's obligations under international law.

I will read a section from the UN convention relating to the status of refugees, which Canada has signed. Article 31 states:

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

Government Orders

The bill does exactly that. It violates that section because it is imposing penalties on account of people's illegal entry or presence on refugees who are directly fleeing persecution.

Last summer and the summer before, we saw two boats come to this country containing refugees fleeing what is agreed by every state in this world to be a terrible civil war in Sri Lanka. There were approximately 478 people on one boat and there were approximately 80 people on another boat. These were people who risked their lives to come to a country where they could be safe.

I would ask all Canadians what they would do if the country in which they found themselves threatened their lives and the lives of their husbands, wives and children; if armed people were coming to get them and draft their children into child armies; if armed thugs were coming to sexually assault wives and young girls or boys; if armed men were coming to kill them, what they would do. I dare say that all Canadians would answer that question the same way. They would do whatever they had to do in order to save the lives of their loved ones and to escape to safety. That may even include paying someone.

Another big problem with the bill is that confuses human smuggling, criminal organizations engaged in inappropriate criminal acts, with the irregular movement of refugees, which often involves the payment of money in order to have an organized subversive way to escape a country.

● (1225)

I also want to spend a moment talking about the nonsense of a queue. There is no queue when it comes to refugees. The government should be ashamed of itself for going out in public and confusing Canadians that these are queue jumpers.

There are two ways refugees come to this country. The first way is under the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. There are refugee camps where they are safe and they can make quarterly applications. The second way is refugees who are directly fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution. Those people fleeing a war zone cannot stop and make an application. Those people do not present themselves to the nearest authorities and queue up. Can anyone imagine the Jewish people in Nazi Germany showing up at German authorities and saying that they want to make an application to claim refugee status? That is absurd, and international law recognizes that.

The idea that refugees are coming here and some are jumping in front of others is absolutely false. People who are trying to muddy the waters for political purposes by confusing those two concepts ought to be ashamed of themselves. At its fundamental base, Canada has an obligation. We have signed treaties to be a mature country on the world stage and we have agreed to accept our obligations, and one of those is to do our fair share to accept refugees.

The definition of a refugee is clear. Refugees must show our country that they have a well-founded fear of persecution. By definition, we are talking about a profoundly serious situation where someone risks death, injury, torture or some unacceptable conduct or treatment that violates the common norms of civilized society. Those people need our help and Canada needs to have fair rules to adjudicate such claims.

Canadians of course do not agree with human smuggling. We want to do our fair share to ensure that criminal organizations that are trafficking in people or who are involved in the international sex trade are punished and stopped. Those are criminals. That is very different from refugees fleeing persecution and the whole network that has surrounded that activity of people who help them.

This act would criminalize the whole process. It would even criminalize those people who help refugees. Church groups, faith groups and refugee organizations all risk being deemed to be in violation of this act and being deemed criminals because they help and assist refugees. That has to be misguided. That has to be wrong. That has to be bad legislation.

Under the government, since 2006 there has been a concerted drop in the number of family-class visas that have been issued. There has been a dramatic drop in the number of refugee visas issued by the government. These are not New Democrat official opposition numbers. These are numbers published on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website that just came out in June.

The government needs to restore Canada's reputation on the world stage by not only treating the refugee claimants who come to this country but by improving our system so that we allow more refugees to get to Canada and be settled, and so that we let more of those millions of people who are in refugee camps and in dangerous situations all over the world get to places of safe haven and safety.

I have seen members of this House from every party show up at commemorations of the *Komagata Maru* or the *MS St. Louis*, as I just pointed out. We all bow our heads and remember those days when Canada sent away boatloads of people who came to our shores seeking freedom and safety, only decades later to find out that we were sending those people back to their deaths.

Canada deserves fair and balanced refugee legislation. This legislation is not fair and balanced and the official opposition will work hard to amend this until it is or defeat it.

● (1230)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always listen, often with amazement, to some of the things my friends across the way say. I want to begin by saying as emphatically as possible that the suggestion that this legislation will result in any boat being sent away from Canada's shores is complete poppycock. That is the most polite word I can think of for that. The suggestion that any church group would be found criminally responsible for helping a refugee is again poppycock.

The fact of the matter is that recently Canada let some 35,000 refugee applicants into our country in a single year. No one can suggest that Canada is not doing its fair share around the world.

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I am interested in my friend's old adage. However, there is another adage, that being that the very definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Canadians want us to do something different.

Canada cannot possibly solve all of the refugee problems of the world on its own. Would my friend join me in calling on the United Nations to get its act together and properly deal with the worldwide refugee crisis?

• (1235)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, the official opposition will always call on the United Nations to do its share and improve its ability to assist refugees around the world with finding places of safe haven.

The world is a very dangerous place. There are terrible situations occurring in many countries of the world wherein people awaken every morning potentially facing the end of their lives or the lives of their loved ones. Generally, that is not something we deal with in Canada, so of course I would join my friend in calling for that.

My hon. colleague points out that this legislation will not result in any boat being turned away. However, it is worse than that. It purports to result in boats never actually getting here. Specifically, that is what it aims to do. The minister has said that. Through the use of draconian rules, he hopes to dissuade anyone from actually attempting to get on a boat or plane to get to Canada. That will result in the ultimate price to be paid, that being more refugees facing persecution if they are unable to attempt to escape to a safe haven like Canada.

I want to say one last thing. When refugees are fleeing a place, they will go wherever they can. Canada is not immune to that. We expect countries around Sri Lanka to accept refugees. We should be no different in this country.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway whether he had a chance, as I did, to meet with members of the Tamil community after the arrival of the refugees to the west coast shores to hear of the shock, trauma and vulnerability experienced by the families in detention.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I have in fact met on many occasions with representatives from the Tamil community.

While watching the final days of the civil war in Sri Lanka, we saw the Sri Lankan government prohibit international journalists as well as the Red Cross from entering the country. We heard stories of war crimes and atrocities, including the use of phosphorus bombs and the bombing of hospitals. We heard of extrajudicial killings. In fact, recently there has been some authenticated film footage showing summary executions of Tamils taking place on the side of the road by regular Sri Lankan army officials. It was a bit of a glimpse into the seriousness of the problems that had happened in that country.

Then we had the two boats which came carrying refugees from that war-torn country. We have to put this in perspective. We had slightly over 500 people come to these shores. It is a country of 34 million people, the second largest country in the world by land mass. There is no reason for people to jump to knee-jerk reactions because

we had 500 people come to our shores from a civil war. That represented less than 2% of the entire refugee claimants of that year.

Earlier my friend from the government side said that we had let in 34,000 refugees last year. That is 10,000 visas fewer than were issued five years ago. Therefore, the trend is getting worse, not better.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway for highlighting some of the draconian provisions in this bill. One of the things I am really concerned about is the detention of children. As a father of two children, one 5 and the other 15, I cannot imagine kids being brought up in a war-torn country, then travelling a month or two on a very crowded boat, and on top of that being detained for over a year in Canada. That is not acceptable.

Is my colleague aware of the long-lasting impacts it can have on children being detained for a year in Canada?

• (1240)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, from the Australian experience there is data on that very question. In particular, there was a government-mandated commission that looked into the effects upon children being detained. We must remember the context by which these people arrive in Canada. Most have suffered intense trauma. We need not be psychologists to know that those who have escaped brutal civil wars and/or witnessed episodes of unspeakable violence have been traumatized. It would be traumatic for any of us and is particularly traumatic for children.

When people come to this country and are then locked up for a year without having their cases reviewed on a regular basis, it adds to that trauma. This bill would be draconian and unfair to anyone and is particularly unjustifiable when we think of the effects it will have on children, especially those fleeing places of unspeakable violence and horror.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway made a point earlier in his excellent presentation that the statement frequently made by government members that somehow refugees are jumping the queue has no reality. I certainly agree with that. However, I put that very question to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and his response was that there is a queue for refugees, that they should go to an international refugee facility run by the United Nations and wait there.

We have heard a government member say that the UN should get its act together. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is entirely funded by voluntary donations from governments. It is already stretched beyond its limits and was not created as a holding room for political refugees. It responds to crisis situations. Therefore, the notion that refugees should first find their way to a camp run by the UNHCR shows a complete absence of understanding of the political refugee situation.

I wonder if the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway would comment on this misapprehension of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism on how refugees arrive in this country.

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Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It is easy to be generous when asking someone else to pay the freight and carry the load. The statement by the minister presumes that it is other countries that must have the UNHCR refugee camps, not us. Canada does not have one. For instance, if people are fleeing Sri Lanka by boat, I guess we expect Sri Lanka's neighbouring countries, such as Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, to welcome and support those people in international refugee camps. However, we do not have one. Internationally, what kind of position is that?

It is worse to think that, unlike Canada, many of the countries surrounding Sri Lanka have not signed international covenants on the treatment of refugees. It is even worse to think that a first world and wealthy country such as Canada has far more resources for settling refugees. Perhaps Canada should open some UNHCR camps in Canada. If members opposite think that the UN should be doing its share and picking up the slack, maybe Canada could lead the way by offering to do more in that regard.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue this morning and have the chance to listen to my hon. colleague. I congratulate him as a critic at our committee. I look forward to working with him and his party as we work through a number of issues at citizenship and immigration, including this bill dealing with public safety.

I am very grateful for the chance to rise and support Bill C-4 and its legislation therein. It will allow Canada to crack down on dangerous and illegal human smuggling operations while still maintaining our long and proud tradition of providing a safe haven for refugees.

As several of my hon. colleagues have noted, Canada is a compassionate country that welcomes immigrants and refugees from all over the world. In fact, every year we welcome about 250,000 newcomers to our country, which includes granting asylum to more than 10,000 persecuted persons each year and resettling another 12,000 refugees from abroad. In 2010, we welcomed close to 280,000 new immigrants to our country, one of the highest numbers in post-war history.

Let me point out, when we passed the refugee reform legislation in the last Parliament, Bill C-11, contingent upon the passing of that legislation was that we as a country would accept on a yearly basis an additional 2,500 refugees to our country. It speaks to the compassion, care and concern this government has for refugees across the world. Quite honestly, that bill passed with unanimous consent. My congratulations to everyone in the House who chose to do what was right for our country, what was right for refugees and to ensure that we passed a piece of legislation that is good for Canada as well as those refugees who see Canada as their new home. In helping refugees begin a new life Canadians are helping to ensure that we maintain our international obligations and at the same time build stronger and safe communities and fulfill the promise of Canada, the most welcoming nation in the world.

Our government is committed not only to preserving but also strengthening this already impressive track record. As I noted, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, which received royal assent on June 29, 2010, will allow us to help more people and do it faster. We have

committed significant dollars to ensure that this process and program is implemented to the best of our ability as a government and the best of our ability as a civil service. We have set aside that funding and the person power in order to implement the changes to the asylum system as well as to resettle an additional 2,500 refugees on top of what we already accept as a nation.

The government and many Canadians believe that Canada's generosity should not be extended to criminal smuggling. There is a significant difference when one talks about human compassion and treatment of refugees and the sick and utterly despised human smuggling system on which the government is prepared to take action to ensure it is lowered and lessened. Unfortunately, it will be difficult to get rid of it entirely. However, we strive to lower and lessen the opportunity for human smugglers to make money off the backs of other people in this world.

One of the strongest commitments our government made to Canadians when we were first elected in 2006 was that we would take action to make our streets, our homes and our communities safer for everyone. We delivered on that commitment in a number of ways. Again, when it relates to illegal smuggling operations of all kinds that are of concern to law enforcement officers, as well as all Canadians, the government has taken action to crack down on such increasingly dangerous and violent operations.

Shutting down these organized criminal networks is vitally important to both protecting the health of Canadians, as well as their safety and security. Our message in dealing with illegal smuggling operations has been crystal clear. Canada will take decisive action to protect our borders, as well as the safety and security of the law-abiding citizens who are proud to call this great country home.

Human smuggling poses significant risks to our borders and to all Canadians. It is a criminal activity that calls out for action both domestically, which we will implement with C-4, and internationally. That is what Canadians want. It is what they have asked for and that is what our government will do.

● (1245)

The bottom line is that human smuggling undermines Canada's security. Large-scale arrivals make it difficult to properly identify those who arrive, including the smugglers. They hide on these ships. They dress themselves exactly the same way as the potential refugees. It is almost impossible, and it takes a tremendous amount of work of both the CBSA, Canada Border Services Agency, and our RCMP officers to try to determine who will apply for refugee status and who is a smuggler.

Human smuggling is not just a profitable business; it is also dangerous and it puts the lives of those being smuggled in jeopardy.

I was in Vancouver, British Columbia to see the ship that brought those poor individuals to our country. It is one thing the opposition may not like to talk about, but the fact is these ships are not cruise ships, they are literally containers to stuff human life into. The ships are put out to sea in the hope that it shows up on the shore of a country that will accept it. This trip is probably the most dangerous trip that these individuals will have to face.

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To do that to individuals, including children, is abhorrent, unacceptable and the government will ensure that it stops in our country. Under the Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act, our government is cracking down on human smugglers in a number of different ways.

The proposed legislation will enable the Minister of Public Safety to declare the existence of a human smuggling event, making those involved subject to the act's measures. It will make it easier to prosecute human smugglers. It will impose mandatory minimum prison sentences on convicted smugglers. It will also hold the shipowners and operators to account for the use of their ships in human smuggling operations.

These are proposed reforms which our government is proposing. They will help the safety and security of our streets and our communities by providing for the mandatory detention of participants for up to one year or until a positive decision by the immigration and refugee board regarding their refugee claims, or whichever comes sooner, in order to allow for the determination of identity, the identity admissibility and illegal activity.

It is unfair, unwarranted and unacceptable that in this day and age ships like these come into port and the individuals on those ships are simply allowed to move into the general population of our country. We cannot have that happen. We do not know who is on those ships. We have no idea whether there are serious criminals, smugglers or shipowners on them.

The process to determine the history of the individuals, the potential criminal activity of some of those individuals and the fairness upon which some of those individuals will receive refugee status in our country has to be done properly and right to ensure the safety of all individuals on the ship and all of the 34 million Canadians in our country.

Under the proposed act, our government is also reducing the attraction of coming to Canada by way of illegal human smuggling operations. We will prevent those who come to Canada as part of human smuggling events from applying for permanent residence status for a period of five years, should they successfully obtain refugee status, and prevent such individuals from sponsoring family members for a period of at least five years. These are not easy decisions to make. They are difficult ones to make in terms of how we will process individuals and families ending up on these ships.

Whether it is the United Nations, or international bodies or governments in our country, we have to stop the smugglers from doing this. It is not enough just to try to attempt to go after them internationally. We have to let smugglers know that it will be difficult for them to fill those ships, because individuals will not want to risk what may happen to them in the process of coming over.

• (1250)

Furthermore, after the passage of the act, our government will also make administrative changes to ensure that participants in a human smuggling events do not receive health care benefits that are any more generous than those that Canadians receive now. From my perspective, having gone across the country holding town hall meetings with a number of my colleagues, this is one of the principle

parts of what it is to be Canadian, and we exude that with the principle of fairness.

Canadians accept and understand our role from an international perspective to help those who need it most. We have shown that during tragic incidents, such as what happened in Haiti. We have shown that in our acceptance and our obligation, punching above our weight in terms of the number of refugees that we accept from the United Nations to come to our country each and every year.

What we cannot do, and what Canadians do not want us to do, is to move beyond the principle of fairness. If those who come to our country receive health care benefits that exceed the benefits Canadians receive, then we need to act, and Canadians have asked us to act. We are doing just that in this legislation.

As the minister has noted, the reforms that our government is proposing are tough. We are not saying anything else about that. They are tough, but they are fair.

While Canada has a proud history and a tradition of welcoming immigrants who wish to start a new life here, Canada's generous immigration system has become a target for human smuggling operations. We must take action to end the abuse of Canada's immigration system by human smugglers because it is not acceptable. The majority of Canadians do not accept it and the majority of people in the House of Commons do not accept it. However, to do so we must have laws and measures in place that will deter and prevent these operations.

Canada's refugee resettlement program is one of the most generous in the developed world. As I mentioned, there is no country, on a per capita basis, that accepts more refugees than Canada. We continually punch above our weight when it comes to showing care and compassion for those who need it the most. Canada is one of the most generous countries in the developed world. On average, we take one out of every ten refugees from around the world who wants to resettle here, and it is a big world.

That speaks to the acceptance that we have as Canadians and it speaks to what we as a government believe must be maintained and be continued in the future. However, we must do so under some principles, issues, laws and measures that make sense to us as a government, but also meet the common sense rule and the principle of fairness rule that Canadians have asked us to do.

The critic for the NDP mentioned the issue of a queue not existing. Individuals in refugee camps have lived in squalor and have done so for the last five to ten years. They have been determined by the UN to be refugees. We as a country have an obligation to accept our fair and higher percentage than that which has been slated for us.

We are shutting the doors on individuals and potential families coming here when a boat with 500 individuals on it comes in. It may slightly open the door for the opportunity for a new life for those individuals who have been smuggled here, but it shuts the door on those who are already refugees who have been waiting for that same opportunity to begin a new life.

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I beg to differ with my hon. friend. We have a process when these ships come here. It sets in place what we have determined is an acute problem with queue-jumping. When those ships cannot rest in any port across our country, then we do not have queue-jumping. Instead we have a fair process that has been determined by the United Nations to be an extremely good one.

• (1255)

All sides of the House of Commons determined that reform was necessary in our refugee legislation, and that was passed unanimously. We are now coming close to the end of the implementation point where this process, the new refugee act, will now begin. It has been hailed across the world as a system that will improve what has already been considered by many to be one of the best systems in the world.

It is unfair to those who have patiently waited, through legitimate means, to come to our country to have human smugglers illegally bring people into our country. It is that simple and the Canadian public understands this. In every town hall meeting, whether they were in total support of the legislation or had some difficulty with parts of it, one point individuals did not argue with was the fact that Canada had a principle of fairness that it acted upon when it came to all of its international obligations, specifically in dealing with refugee reform.

Queue jumping is not fair. It is not fair to people in our country and it is not fair to those who have been determined to be refugees to come here. That principle upon which fairness exists has to start and this legislation would help do that. When this happens, Canada's immigration system becomes less fair. More than that, our safety is actually threatened by criminal or terrorist organizations that can and often do use proceeds from human smuggling operations to fund other more violent activities, which pose a significant threat to our way of life.

No one in the House can tell me that these individuals who pay \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000 and sometimes upwards of \$50,000 for a place on what is deemed to be a boat have it in their pocket to do so. There is an obligation, in fact a price, that is on each one of those individuals to repay the exorbitant fee, the rip-off. The human smugglers could care less whether these individuals survive, only that the demanded payment is made in order to get these people from their country of origin. Those individuals spend their lifetime trying to repay that loan and they live in fear doing so. They have no idea what recriminations will be put upon them if they are unable to do so.

This circle of human smuggling has to stop. We have to find a way to erase the circle and not have it exist in the fashion that it has with Canada being a haven for these ships. Human smugglers cram individuals onto a ship and let it sail into a Canadian port. We will not let that happen in a way that Canada is seen across the world as the place to do this, or that Canada is a place for them to take a chance with hundreds or thousands of lives. It will not happen anymore. We are determined as a government to put a stop to it.

Canadians have told us en masse across the country. We just fought an election over a number of issues and this was one of them. Canadians sent us back to govern. They sent us here to implement

this bill because they believe it is right legislation and it is timely. Perhaps it should have been implemented decades ago.

Under the legislation, the very ship that my hon. colleague from the NDP spoke about would not have been turned away. It would have had an opportunity. There would be a process in place with legislation and regulations that would work.

I look forward to getting the bill to committee. I look forward to getting this bill back for second reading and implementing the legislation.

• (1300)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with the concept of queue-jumping.

I wonder how the parliamentary secretary thinks that people who have fled for their lives, who have been victims of violence, who have lost all of their property, their homes and with no ability to communicate, would know about Canadian regulations. How do they know there is a queue in Canada? It presumes a kind of world that does not exist out there for refugees who have fled for their lives.

They are not shopping for a country; they are fleeing to safety. The kind of penalties that the bill would place on these refugees would doubly victimize them. For those who have been victims of violence, who have lost everything, a year of detention would be imposed on them. They would be given an extra penalty for arriving in Canada.

How does the parliamentary secretary think refugees shop for countries to go to when they are in the business of fleeing for their lives?

• (1305)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I certainly see the differences that we have on this side of the House, based on the question that is being asked.

First and foremost, these individuals who want to flee their countries do not shop. They are forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars to get on a ship. It is the human smugglers who do the shopping.

We are going to stop that. No longer are they going to take advantage of individuals who have basic human rights taken away from them by individuals who demand huge sums of money, who take those hundreds of individuals and stuff them on a boat, push it out of port, and hope it lands somewhere. Not only do these smugglers not have the nerve to show themselves, but they also actually dress themselves as potential refugees who are coming to this country to try to hide within them, to try to get the same kind of treatment that the individuals who are trying to flee their country are attempting to get from Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I were to canvass my constituents and Canadians today, I am sure they would be somewhat surprised that here we are on the first day of the session talking about the number one priority bill for this particular Parliament when the number one issue for Canadians is the issue of the economy, jobs, and so forth.

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Having said that, as the critic for this particular bill I am very much concerned in terms of the direction that the government continues to want to push on this particular issue. I think it is very telling that in one of the newspaper articles I have received, we have a picture of the *Ocean Lady* and what appears to be the Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration. For the Conservative government, that is what this has all been about. It is a wedge issue the government is using to try to demonize immigration, immigrants, and refugees and leave a bad taste for Canadians, when it should in fact be promoting tolerance, education, and so forth.

The government, the minister and the parliamentary secretary say we are after the human smugglers. The parliamentary secretary should recognize that, and I would ask him to acknowledge that going after these human smugglers means the people who are really going to be paying the price are the individuals who need and who are looking for asylum. Will the government not recognize that at least indirectly, if not directly, it is making a victim of the individuals who are seeking asylum?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, there are two points I want to make very quickly.

The first point is that those individuals who seek asylum in this country and who deserve asylum as refugees will receive it. There is absolutely no question. This legislation would not change any of that from happening. It will not, it cannot and it shall not.

The second point is this. I know the member was elected in a byelection in the previous Parliament, so he was here for part of it. We introduced this legislation in the last Parliament. We literally begged the opposition to support it, at least at second reading, so that we could get this legislation to a legislative committee to study it and try to work with them. I can explain to members that on two occasions both Bill C-35, the crooked consultants act, and Bill C-11, the refugee reform legislation, ended up coming back to the House and after negotiation and work passed unanimously. Every member sitting on the opposite side who was here in the last Parliament said no to that opportunity.

We are not going to say no to Canadians. It is back in the House. It is a priority. We said it was a priority. Those on this side of the House keep their word.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the parliamentary secretary's comments. I am sure most of us in this House, if not all of us, have had opportunity to work with refugees. In my situation, our church has sponsored refugees, and many of these people have become close friends.

Through the last number of months, the parliamentary secretary went on a tour and actually came to my area and conducted a round table there. The interesting thing I am finding is that it is not just the long-standing Canadians who want us to move on this issue; it is actually some of the most recent immigrants to this country who are the strongest supporters of the measures in this piece of legislation.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary would care to comment about that, because I think it is somewhat counterintuitive to our way of thinking. We think that maybe the most recent refugees do not want us to close these loopholes. However, I think we would find that they want us to follow the rules.

• (1310)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for hosting the event. Two of my colleagues also attended the event held in the member's riding. It was well attended. It was a very fascinating and interesting discussion. We were there for a good part of the evening and made many notes.

The member makes a perfect point that in the last federal election those who believe we are moving in the right direction include all Canadians, whether they be Canadians who sought and received permanent residency and citizenship in the last 12 months, the last 12 years or the last 80 years.

Across the board this legislation speaks to what Canadians have said is the right thing to do. I come back to the point that the member refers to, which is the principle of fairness. The principle of fairness suggests that when we have achieved it, a vast majority of Canadians, regardless of how long they have had the honour to be Canadians, agree with the direction we are moving.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary gave a passionate defence of the people coming on these boats as victims, saying they were forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars to come here and that they are victims.

If that is the case, I would like the parliamentary secretary to explain how depriving those people of the ability to sponsor their families for five years, depriving those people of being able to apply for permanent residency for five years and preventing those people from getting travel documents issued by the Canadian government for five years helps them. If those people are truly victims, why is the government re-victimizing them and punishing them again?

In terms of who is supporting the bill, I have a list of about 100 different groups across the country that oppose the bill, including Amnesty International, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C., the Centre for Refugee Studies, Christian Reform World Relief Committee, Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, the Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service, the Quaker Committee for Refugees, and so on.

The vast majority, if not the unanimous community, of groups that work with refugees in this country are diametrically opposed to the bill.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I have tried. I have repeated time and time again, whether in Vancouver, Kitchener, Halifax, or the House of Commons, that the bill is everything about ensuring that we assist victims and that we go after smugglers.

While I appreciate what the member is saying in making large assumptions about an individual who eventually is qualified for refugee status, I do not think true refugees fleeing for their lives from their countries of origin come to this country and are concerned.

What they are concerned about is their ability to achieve refugee status and to start a new life. The five-year period to ensure that we are doing this properly still allows us to keep our arms as wide open as we ever have as a country in welcoming those who need our assistance, but at least it is telling human smugglers that they are not going to take advantage of our country anymore.

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Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-4, the Conservative government's bill to address human smuggling.

We in the official opposition and key stakeholders from across Canada from all walks of life are very concerned about the approach the Conservative government is taking with the bill.

The Conservatives claim that the bill cracks down on human smuggling, but in reality, as the bill has been written, it will concentrate too much power in the hands of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and unfairly penalize the would-be refugees.

New Democrats would rather attack the criminals, the smugglers and the traffickers. Instead of doing that, the bill will hurt legitimate refugees and people who try to help them. The proposed process is unclear. It is arbitrary and it is very unfairly discriminatory.

The House approved a strong and balanced refugee law in the last sitting. Instead of the new, flawed approach proposed by the bill, we need to have better enforcement of the old bill that was passed in the last Parliament.

Conservatives should be less focused on photo ops and more focused on enforcing the laws that we already have against human smuggling. The government's approach to human trafficking and human smuggling should be focused on providing law enforcement agencies and the Immigration and Refugee Board with the resources they need to get the job done instead of playing politics with refugees.

Bill C-4 takes the wrong approach in a number of ways. I would like to highlight some of the concerns of the official opposition today.

First, regarding designated claimants, the bill allows the minister to designate a group of refugees as irregular arrivals in a fashion that creates two classes of refugee claimants. This poses a possible violation of charter equality rights and the refugee convention.

Second, designated claimants, including children, will be mandatorily detained for a year on arrival or designation, without even a review by the Immigration and Refugee Board. This is an even more clear violation of the charter, as the Supreme Court of Canada has already struck down mandatory detention without review on security certificates. It seems that this could imply that indefinite detention is on the basis of identity, with no possible release until the minister decides that identity is established.

As I am sure members are aware, arbitrary detention is also a violation of a number of international treaties to which we are signatories.

There is also a concern with the release conditions imposed by Bill C-4, as the mandatory conditions set out in regulations will be imposed on all designated claimants released from detention. It is very troubling that the conditions are not specified, making this very unclear. On principle, though, mandatory conditions would be unfair, as they are unable to take into account individual cases.

The problem also extends to the appeal process, since under Bill C-4 decisions on claims by designated persons could not be appealed

to the refugee appeal division. This is discriminatory and again risks violating provisions and the refugee convention.

The government has tried this approach before, and all parties opposed the previous bill that was introduced in the last Parliament, Bill C-49 when it was brought to Parliament because there were concerns about the undue amount of power it handed to the minister and because it would likely contravene Canadian and international law. Those concerns are still part of the new Bill C-4.

We can look at other international examples. My colleague from Vancouver Kingsway pointed this out earlier, and I will highlight it again.

● (1315)

When we look at what has happened elsewhere in the world, similar laws have been met with opposition by Amnesty International, which has started a campaign to tackle the same misinformation surrounding refugees who arrive by boat. The campaign highlights the fact that it is legal under international law to arrive by boat and that the vast majority of those who go to another country by boat are in fact legitimate claimants. This bill ignores this information.

There was a high court ruling in November 2010 in Australia that ruled in favour of two Sri Lankan refugees who claimed that laws barring them from appealing in Australian courts were unfair. The approach taken by the Conservative government in this bill makes it very possible that the same situation could arise in Canada if the bill is passed.

What is really happening is that the Conservatives are playing politics with refugees. That is the real optic of this bill. They are claiming this is a public safety issue and the bill was introduced by the public safety minister, but the issue is clearly one that primarily deals with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This is an immigration and refugee issue, not a public safety issue.

The official opposition recognizes and respects responsibility for refugees, unlike the Conservatives who have taken an approach that would damage Canada's standing in the international community and violates its commitment under the conventions relating to the status of refugees and the rights of the child. The process proposed by Bill C-4 is unclear, arbitrary and, ultimately, very discriminatory. Even more telling is that research and studies from other countries have shown that the bill would not curb human smuggling at all.

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It is not just the official opposition that has concerns about this bill. There are many key stakeholders across our country with questions and concerns on this issue. They are outright worried about the approach that the government is taking to tackle this problem. The Canadian Council for Refugees has called for this bill to be scrapped entirely. Amnesty International Canada says that Bill C-4 falls far short of Canada's international human rights and refugee protection obligations and will result in serious violations of the rights of refugees and migrants. A program director with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association has issued a very scathing attack on the Conservative government's attitude toward refugees generally and Bill C-4 in particular stating that there was no need for this draconian measure contemplated by the Conservative government.

Another organization that has spoken out against this particular bill and the one previous to this, the Canadian Bar Association, stated that it did not support the legislation in its previous form as it violates charter protection against arbitrary detention and prompt review of detention, as well as Canada's international obligations respecting the treatment of persons seeking protection. An expert panel at the Centre for Refugee Studies has called this proposed bill draconian.

As we can see, many organizations that come from various walks of life have spoken against this bill being proposed by the Conservative government.

It is clear that the bill takes the wrong approach. I will speak more specifically to why the bill is a wrong approach for Canada to take. First, current legislation already allows for a life sentence for human smuggling. Bill C-4 may be contrary to section 15 of the charter regarding equality under the law. Bill C-4 would create new second-class refugees who are denied permanent residency, temporary resident permits, denied on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and denied applications for permanent residence.

• (1320)

Many legal scholars and constitutional experts argue that this would create inequality under the law simply because the minister has designated immigrants due to their mode of arrival.

Bill C-4 may be contrary to section 9 of the charter, "arbitrary detention". Bill C-4 would also impose a mandatory detention on designated foreign nationals for up to 12 months.

Bill C-4 is contrary to the UN convention relating to the status of refugees. In particular, Article 31 states:

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

In summary, given all the information, the official opposition, key stakeholders and many concerned Canadians across this country are asking why the Conservatives are taking this approach. What answers does the government have for questions about the unconstitutionality of this bill, in particular the arbitrary detention measures? Even more concerning is how the government can justify the mandatory detention of children.

My friend across the aisle talked about how Canadians have been compassionate about our immigration and refugee policies over the years. I would have to agree with that because I am an immigrant myself. I came here 31 years ago and it was this country's generosity that allowed me to migrate here.

However, I would ask my colleagues across the aisle if they are changing the definition of "compassion". How can they justify putting children in detention? In my dictionary, the dictionary that Canadians have, compassion is not defined by putting children in detention centres. That is very troubling to me. Surely the Conservatives cannot justify putting children in detention.

This summer, I had an opportunity to attend a soccer tournament in my riding. I saw a program where new immigrant students were playing soccer matches with one another. The program was helping youth integrate into society. That is the kind of Canada that I envision. I do not envision a Canada where we put children in detention centres before we allow them to prosper in this country. Canada's compassion is why I am proud to be a Canadian. We need to ensure that children who come here from different countries where they were persecuted are treated with compassion and not put into detention centres.

I cannot understand how the government can justify the detention of children for over a year without any review at all. Refugees often arrive by plane. Does the government have any explanation as to why it is targeting the refugees on board boats? It is totally unclear what criteria the government would use to designate irregular travellers. Is arriving by plane possibly irregular or is it only by boat? It is even more unclear what would be defined as a group. Could two or more people be considered a group? This would mean that nearly all refugees would be designated simply because they do not travel alone. Is that fair?

The bill would block family reunification. As we heard previously, it would take five years after refugees have come here for them to be reunited with their family. That is not acceptable. It prevents some refugees from applying for permanent residency for up to five years. Why prevent family reunification? That is the question I have for my colleagues opposite in this House.

• (1325)

Bill C-4 would give the government the power to arrest and detain any non-citizens, including permanent residents, based on mere suspicion of criminality. Why is the government attacking the rights of newcomers?

The final question I have for the government side is as follows. In view of all the information, the concerns from key stakeholders, refugee groups and so many Canadians from all walks of life, would the minister tell us why the government did not decide to go after just the criminals and not the legitimate refugees?

• (1330)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I come from a riding that is one of the most diverse in the entire country. In fact, some of the individuals who, unfortunately, were on one of those ships actually ended up in my riding. Many have remained in hiding. They are in fear of the people who smuggled them here. They have a huge debt that they have to somehow try to pay off. These individuals are not enjoying their Canadian experience because of the way in which they came to this country.

When talking about compassion, it would be compassionate to have a refugee reform process that was changed unanimously by the House. It would be compassionate to change the immigration system so that a million people are not waiting to come to this country by cutting it in half. It would be compassionate to increase settlement services for immigrants, including those in my riding, and in my community, which is one of the fastest growing communities in the country, so they can have access to local services to help them find jobs, help them learn English and help them improve and be like my parents who came to this country in the 1960s and who worked very hard.

Unfortunately, the Liberals do not understand that when the immigration system and the refugee system are improved, we are actually looking after the economy because immigrants, people who come to this country, are an important part of helping make this country as great as it is and as great as it will be.

I have a question for the hon. member. Why, when we see the devastation that these people coming over on these boats have suffered, will the member not simply join with us in attacking the people who deserve to be attacked, the people who force these poor people onto ships and force them into a life of debt, the criminals, the smugglers? The member should work with us to pass this legislation so we can get the smugglers out of the system and have a better refugee system so people who come here can enjoy their Canadian experience and will not need to live in hiding across this country.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, this is all smoke and mirrors. I have seen this double-speak from the Conservatives over and over again.

Can the Conservatives look Canadians in the eye and tell them that people who are smuggling refugees into Canada are on those ships? The smugglers will not be on the ships. Only the refugees will be on the ships. Smugglers will not knowingly jump on these ships to come to Canada along with the refugees.

In talking about compassion and how we have evolved over the years, I migrated to Canada 31 years ago and it took two years for our family reunification application to pass at that time. Under the Conservative government, we have seen family reunification times grow every year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative member recognized that immigrants do contribute to the economy. I want to kind of twist that comment around to this particular bill.

Would the hon. member agree with me that the longer legitimate refugees are held in settlements the longer they are prevented from

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being able to become active in the Canadian economy and that not allowing for a faster process does have a negative impact on those who are here legitimately and who are not allowed to participate but are locked up for greater periods of time under this administration? Would that not make some economic sense as well?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. The best way to help our refugees is to integrate them into our economy and into our country as soon as possible. The way to do that is through the process we have in place. We have the Immigration and Refugee Board that deals with refugees. We have a system that works.

However, we do need to provide more resources to our law enforcement agencies and to the Immigration and Refugee Board so these individuals can be processed quickly and become productive citizens of this country and contribute to the economy.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, foreigners accepted as refugees cannot become permanent residents for five years, so they are not able to study. Earlier, members were talking about the economy. If these refugees have to wait five years to receive recognition of their education equivalency or to have access to university for those who already have a degree, this means that we lose out. We cannot retrain these newcomers and they end up trapped in poverty or being economically dependent.

Does my colleague not think that there is a contradiction when we say that we must stand up for the Canadian economy, yet we are closing the door on these people for five years, not allowing them to retrain or to contribute their professional skills to Canadian society? Is that not a contradiction?

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has asked a wonderful, very sensitive question.

The Conservatives always talk about one thing and then do another. If they were really concerned about helping immigrants and refugees integrate into our communities in this wonderful country and to help our economy, they would be putting procedures in place to do just that. They would be helping the Immigration and Refugee Board to process them faster so we could get them into our system and become productive citizens. However, the way the Conservatives have this set up it will take five years.

My colleague is absolutely right. The people that are coming here may want to go to university or college to upgrade their education so they can integrate into our society and get the jobs that will help them and their families. Certainly that does not seem to be where the Conservatives want to go on this.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we heard just moments ago the question from the Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage in which he referred to this bill as assisting refugees in “enjoying their Canadian experience”. I wonder, how is jailing refugees—men, women and children—in Canada for a year somehow an enjoyable Canadian experience?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I talked about this earlier in the House and I will repeat it. I am the father of two children and I cannot imagine my children being subjected to this sort of Draconian measure that is being brought in by the Conservatives.

Children and their parents are persecuted in the countries from which they come. They are persecuted by the smugglers on their journey to a safe country. And the Conservative government wants to put in place a Draconian law that would detain these young people for over a year.

The Conservatives are redefining compassion. Their definition of compassion is to put children in detention centres in this country.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments about the number of groups that are opposed to this measure. What our colleague fails to understand is that this was a clear part of our last campaign. It was one of our platform measures. It had been discussed prior to the House rising. Canadians knew what they were voting for when they supported this measure.

I would like to ask my colleague, why is he not willing to accept a strong mandate for this reasonable and fair approach that deals with this? Would he actually want those who have been sitting in the queue for years to take a back seat to those who are now jumping the queue by getting on boats that are operated by illegal smugglers?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, there is a consistent way the Conservatives ask questions. They keep reinforcing that. My colleague said that we have already talked about queue jumping. When a person is being persecuted in a country where, for example, there is a war going on, there is no queue. The person gets on a plane or some other mode of transport and goes to whichever country will provide a safe haven. There are no queues. We should get that straight.

• (1340)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of Bill C-4, a bill which would prevent human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system.

[Translation]

Human smuggling is a nefarious industry, one that exists around the world. Unfortunately, thousands of people die each year because of illegal migration and the smugglers who facilitate this migration.

Parliament needs to take action to put an end to the activities of human smugglers who have chosen Canada as a destination for their business, which is the dreadful exploitation of human beings.

[English]

Every year thousands of people around the world die in illegal smuggling operations organized by human smugglers. These people

are not humanitarians. They do not assist people to become bona fide refugees and protect them from persecution. They are profiteers.

In the particular context with which we are dealing, namely those smuggling syndicates that are targeting Canada and which managed to bring two large shiploads of illegal migrants to our west coast in the past two years, our intelligence agencies and security and police partners in Southeast Asia all told us that these syndicates of human smugglers are essentially the gunrunners, the smugglers who helped to fuel the civil war in Sri Lanka by illicitly bringing contraband arms, bombs and guns into a theatre of conflict leading to the death of tens of thousands of innocent civilians. Since the end of the hostilities in Sri Lanka, these smuggling syndicates have been looking for a new business model, and instead of moving guns and bombs, they have switched to moving people for a very high price.

We know that those who have enlisted these smuggling syndicates to try to come illegally to Canada in violation of our immigration laws, in violation of our marine laws, in violation of international law, in violation of every principle of safe migration, have been willing to commit to pay up to \$50,000 to the illegal smuggling syndicates. Typically, they pay about 10% of the fixed price as a down payment. A typical down payment to the smuggling syndicate is in the range of \$5,000. The balance is typically payable over the course of time after arrival in Canada and very often through coerced participation in criminal activity.

As I mentioned, every year around the world thousands of people die in smuggling operations, whether they were migrants who suffocated in shipping containers crossing the English Channel or whether they were people who paid smugglers to go to Australia in dangerous shipping boats that crashed up against the shore.

We must act to send a very clear message that Canada is the most open developed country in the world to immigration, to newcomers, to refugees who need our protection and seek new opportunities. In order to maintain that remarkable openness, which by the way represents in Canada the highest level of immigration per capita in the developed world wherein we add .8% of our population per year through legal immigrants, and the highest level of refugee resettlement in the developed world through the 20% increase in our targets for refugee resettlement, by next year we will be accepting some 14,000 resettled refugees. Last year we welcomed 280,000 new permanent residents and we are increasing our program for refugee resettlement.

In order to maintain that generosity, that openness, and the public support which is necessary to maintain that attitude of openness, we must demonstrate to Canadians that our system is characterized by fairness and the rule of law.

One of the reasons that Canadians are so understandably upset when they see large scale smuggling operations is that it violates their sense of fairness and their belief that our immigration system is characterized by the application of fair rules.

Millions of people have come to Canada through our fair and generous immigration or refugee resettlement programs. In my experience they are those who most profoundly resent those who would pay illegal criminal networks to be smuggled to Canada illegally, avoiding the legal system.

• (1345)

My friend opposite and others have said that there is no so-called queue for refugees. First, I do not know how he knows that all or most of those who pay smuggling syndicates are refugees. We constantly hear from the critics that when we talk about our efforts to stop smugglers from targeting Canada we are talking about refugees. How do they know that? We know that many of the people in the two vessels who came to Canada most recently were coming from India transiting through Thailand, both democracies, both with the rule of law and protection for human rights. Perhaps colleagues opposite did not see the CBC report from Chennai in Tamil Nadu in India. Tamil Nadu is a region of southeastern India where tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of Sri Lankan Tamils migrated during the conflict in Sri Lanka, where they sought temporary protection or new opportunities.

The CBC interviewed a group of several young Sri Lankan Tamil migrants in Tamil Nadu, India who said they had made down payments of up to \$5,000 to these syndicates to be transported to Canada. They were not in a war zone. They were not subject to persecution. They said they wanted to come to Canada because they had heard about our “free monthly salaries”. We have to be very careful. We cannot and should not prejudge newly arrived migrants as to their prospective refugee claims. Some may be refugees; some may not. Many may just be seeking economic opportunity and heard that Canada is a soft target and therefore they are willing to pay smuggling syndicates.

What this bill seeks to do is maintain Canada's commitment to our domestic and international legal obligations with respect to refugee protection and to respect our humanitarian obligation to protect bona fide refugees fleeing persecution while at the same time changing the business model of the criminal smuggling syndicates. That is the objective of this bill.

We seek, first, to increase in the bill penalties for smugglers so that there will be a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 10 years for those who are found to participate in a human smuggling event which involves at least 50 individuals or in which there are exacerbating circumstances such as loss of life. We also massively increase the monetary fines for the owners of ships involved in these voyages. It is typically ships, but I should point out that the bill could address non-marine human smuggling events which have occurred in Canada.

That is an important message, but let us be realistic. I have studied this issue very closely. In fact, just last month I was in New Zealand and Bangkok, Thailand meeting with international partners and our own security agencies, as well as international police forces. I was trying to get a better understanding of the nature of these smuggling enterprises. It is very clear that we cannot impose Canadian law in terms of these sanctions on smugglers who operate overseas. The kingpins of these syndicates very rarely come to Canada. They are

most typically jumping around between transit countries in Southeast Asia beyond our legal reach.

Having said that, there is an important dimension of our fight against human smuggling which is not formally in the legislation. It is an operational dimension whereby our government, through the good leadership of my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Safety and the security and police agencies under his ministry, have dispatched additional resources for investigation and co-operation with the governments, police and intelligence agencies in the transit countries. Thanks to the additional resources that we have put into the region, we have managed successfully to prevent any of the planned voyages that were to target Canada. We know, without getting into operational or confidential details, that several voyages were planned for Canada that have been successfully interrupted, thanks in part to the co-operation of Canadian security forces in the region.

• (1350)

Having said that, let us be clear. In any black market there will always be someone willing to provide the contraband good or service if there is sufficient demand at a sufficiently high price point, because we are talking about profiteers. If they are able to get commitments of up to \$50,000 to come to Canada, they will continue to try to find the vessels and put together the complex logistics to bring people from Southeast Asia to Canada. Therefore, in this legislation we must reduce the price point that people are willing to pay to be illegally smuggled to Canada through these criminal syndicates. That is the objective of the bill.

I think some opposition members have not studied the issue in all of its subtlety, or perhaps they do not understand how we are trying to disincentivize people from being willing to pay up to \$50,000 to the smuggling syndicates. That is what the bill seeks to do.

For example, by reducing some of the privileges that normally exist for asylum claimants in Canada, should someone who has arrived in a designated smuggling event under this bill be found by our legal system to be a bona fide refugee in need of our protection, we will not send them back to their country of origin. We will therefore respect and conform with our international and domestic legal obligations. However, there is no obligation on Canada to grant such persons immediate permanent residency, which is normally the case for successful asylum claimants.

What the bill would do would be to say that we would grant people who are deemed to be bona fide refugees who have arrived in a designated smuggling event a temporary residency status in Canada for up to five years, after which we would then reassess the conditions in their country of origin to determine whether the country conditions have improved and whether the risk that was determined at their refugee hearing still continues.

If at that point there is a determination that conditions have improved significantly in that country, that they would no longer face risk if removed, they could then face removal back to their country of origin. However, should conditions in that country not have improved after five years, they would then have access to permanent residency in Canada as a further reflection of our humanitarian instinct.

Government Orders

During those initial five years, here is the key disincentive. Such individuals would not be entitled to the privilege of sponsoring family members to Canada because here is the key aspect of the bill. We know that people are prepared to commit to up to \$50,000 based on a calculation that they subsequently will be able to sponsor family members, so the \$50,000 price point is really not associated with just the migration of one individual, the smuggled individual, but indeed all subsequent family members who may follow that successful claimant. There is a commercial calculation being made here that the \$40,000 to \$50,000 price point may lead to permanent residency for the primary migrant and then subsequently permanent residency for members of the family who in turn could help to pay off the debt to the smuggling syndicate.

In the bill we are seeking to create a doubt, a question mark in the minds of those who constitute the market for the smuggling gangs. Will they be able to get permanent residency in Canada? That would no longer be a certainty. Will they be able to sponsor family members and help pay off the debt? It would no longer be a certainty. We are very strongly persuaded that this is a balanced approach.

Thirteen months ago, when the last large vessel arrived off the west coast with some 500 illegal migrants, Canadians were understandably disturbed with this large scale violation of the integrity of our immigration law and with this mass human smuggling voyage. At that time public opinion polls consistently said that about two-thirds of Canadians thought the government should prevent such vessels from even entering Canadian territorial waters. About 55% of Canadians, and an even higher percentage of new Canadians, immigrants to this country, said that if people who arrive in such a vessel get access to our refugee system and are deemed to be bona fide refugees, they should be immediately returned. That is what the majority of Canadians said.

● (1355)

As a government, we do not believe that approach would respect our legal or humanitarian obligations. Let me be clear. Contrary to some of the demagoguery we hear from critics of the bill, we would continue, notwithstanding that public opinion environment, to allow illegally smuggled migrants who file the refugee claim access to our asylum system, which is the fairest asylum system in the world, bar none. They would continue to have access to that system. We would not send back a single person who is deemed by our legal system likely to face danger of persecution or risk to their lives in their country of origin.

This bill exceeds our international and domestic legal obligations with respect to non-refoulement of refugees. The opposition says that this is like refusing to allow Jewish refugees to come here during the second world war. Nonsense. This approach would allow any refugee, or even a false refugee claimant, access to our asylum system. It would simply reduce some of the privileges that normally are provided to asylum claimants in order to reduce their willingness to pay tens of thousands of dollars to a smuggling syndicate.

One of the contentious aspects of the bill is the enhanced detention provisions. I would invite members of the opposition, perhaps at committee, to ask members of our Canada Border Services Agency and lawyers from my ministry about the difficulty of processing

hundreds of smuggled asylum claimants who are seeking release from detention, because we have to do detention reviews under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act every two, seven and then subsequent 30 days. This means that with several hundred people we have a non-stop revolving door of detention reviews which is massively inefficient.

I would also point out there has been a red herring created by the opposition about mandatory detention for up to a year of all smuggled migrants. The minister, under the bill, would have the authority to release people in exceptional circumstances, such as children. Under the new asylum system adopted by Parliament last year in Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, bona fide asylum claimants will receive a positive protection decision and therefore permanent residency within about three months of making their claim. Such smuggled migrants in the asylum system who are bona fide refugees would be automatically released from immigration detention when they receive a positive asylum decision, and permanent residency in about 90 days.

Let me point out by way of comparison, because there is a lack of perspective in context here, that most of our peer democracies, most other liberal democracies, including those governed by social democratic parties such as the Labour government in Australia, have mandatory detention for all or almost all asylum claimants, not just illegally smuggled asylum claimants, but all or almost all asylum claimants.

That was the law adopted by the United Kingdom under the previous social democratic Labour government. That is the law in Australia under the social democratic Labour government.

I remember Prime Minister Gillard of Australia congratulating the NDP on its 50th anniversary. She actually defends a policy that puts under permanent detention all asylum claimants until their status is resolved. This is, by comparison, a radically more modest approach which only addresses illegally smuggled migrants for a limited period of time until they receive status, which under the new system would be three months.

In closing, the bill constitutes a balanced and humane approach to combatting the scourge of human smuggling. It would allow access to our refugee protection system for bona fide victims of persecution. It would reduce the massive pressure on our system when we face hundreds of people arriving at the same time. It would provide disincentives for people to pay tens of thousands of dollars to criminal networks to be smuggled illegally to Canada, and it would encourage them rather to seek regional resettlement opportunities or protection, if they are indeed refugees.

● (1400)

This is a bill that Canadians expect and demand. We must stand up for our tradition of protection of refugees and our legal and generous immigration system by combatting those who would abuse our country's generosity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments for the minister will have to wait until the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that on September 22 players of the Moose Jaw Warriors will play their home opener in an unfamiliar setting to them and to their fans. I am speaking about a landmark facility featuring a hockey rink, an eight-sheet curling rink and much more. About 250,000 people will pass through the doors each year, bringing tourism dollars to Moose Jaw.

The Government of Canada contributed through the building Canada fund. Other major donors include the Government of Saskatchewan, the city of Moose Jaw, Moose Jaw Soccer Association, Moose Jaw Warriors and JGL Livestock.

Mosaic, a potash company with its Canadian headquarters in my riding, secured the naming rights through a donation for operational funds.

I am pleased to inform members that Moose Javians made this project a reality through their remarkable generosity and community spirit. I am honoured to be part of this community.

It is game on at Mosaic Place in Moose Jaw.

* * *

STANLEY CUP

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in June all Canadians watched with heartbreak as Canada's team, the Canucks, lost the final game of the Stanley Cup to the Boston Bruins.

Being from the beautiful city of Vancouver, I made a few friendly wagers over the outcome of that series, most notably with my friend, the member Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

I rise today to honour that wage by standing in the House to praise the victorious team.

As it turns out, this is an easy task because the essence of the Bruins' victory lies in the heart of British Columbia.

Milan Lucic, the magnificent Bruins' power forward, is a product of, members guessed it, Vancouver. Mr. Lucic was born in Vancouver and learned his craft in the rinks of East Vancouver, including in the great riding of Vancouver Kingsway.

The incomparable, recently retired Mark Recchi, holder of three Stanley Cup rings, was also born in beautiful British Columbia, in Kamloops.

Therefore, as I rise to praise the Boston Bruins, I do so proudly with the full knowledge that their victory was only made possible through the contribution of outstanding British Columbians.

Statements by Members

ROSALIE HALL

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to thank my constituents for placing their trust in me. Scarborough Centre is right in the heart of Scarborough and it is a great privilege to represent such a diverse and vibrant community.

Since being elected to office, I have visited a multitude of different organizations and I am humbled to have met so many wonderful people who make up the very fabric of this great riding.

In fact, just last week, I was fortunate to be able to visit Rosalie Hall, a young parent resource centre situated right beside the Scarborough General Hospital. Serving the community for nearly 100 years, Rosalie Hall has focused in 'on the health, educational needs and the overall well-being of both young mothers and their children.

I would like to applaud and congratulate Mr. Alan Nickell, executive director, his staff and all of the remarkable volunteers at Rosalie Hall for serving the community and for their outstanding work in providing support and opening up new avenues for so many deserving young women and their families.

* * *

[Translation]

CHILD NUTRITION

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, students across Canada recently returned to school. When I was a school board trustee, I saw, first-hand, children who had nothing to eat. We now know that this situation is only getting worse. A growing number of children are starting their school days on empty stomachs. We all know that being hungry makes it impossible to maintain the concentration needed for learning in order to pursue one's education, which is crucial to Canada's future.

Despite local community organizations' superhuman efforts to help these schoolchildren, too many of them still do not have anything to eat. We need to do a great deal more. Is it too much to ask this government to introduce a national nutrition program that could help these victims in our society?

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. Bernard Trotter (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently we have seen some very troubling events take place in Ukraine. The persecution, arrest and continued detention of Yulia Tymoshenko, along with many others, are cause for great concern both in Canada as well as in the international community. Also, we deplore the murder of the journalist Georgy Gongadze and the harassment and intimidation of Ukrainian historians who draw attention to Ukrainian national resistance during Soviet rule.

Statements by Members

These apparently politically-motivated actions undermine the rule of law and human rights, which are at the core of all democracies. The Ukrainian people, having long lived under the rule of regressive and undemocratic Soviet policies, will not accept a return to darker times. Ukrainians deserve to live in a peaceful and prosperous society, where they can enjoy the same freedoms and safeties seen across other western nations.

I stand with the 1.25 million Ukrainian-Canadians, many of whom reside in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who urge the Ukrainian government to strengthen judiciary independence free of political interference.

Slava Ukrainia.

* * *

[Translation]

WAPIKONI MOBILE

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Wapikoni Mobile: a project involving two travelling studios that have visited over a dozen first nations villages every year for the past seven years.

To date, 2,000 young people have learned to create and produce movies and music and develop basic skills, life skills and even survival skills.

This program is for marginalized youth who are not reachable in the more traditional ways: youth at risk for dropping out of school, addiction or suicide.

Wapikoni Mobile restores their confidence and their appetite for learning and helps them prepare to enter the workforce.

The proof is in the pudding: the project creates local jobs and has won 44 Canadian and international awards. What is more, these contemporary works help break down stereotypes and promote aboriginal culture across the country and throughout the world.

Long live Wapikoni, in spite of the recent, unexpected cuts to the program.

* * *

[English]

SARNIA LABOUR DAY PARADE

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in our nation's House of Commons to call attention to the 2011 Sarnia labour day parade, an annual tradition in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton since 1902. Cool weather and little rain could not dampen the spirits of the marchers, and the crowds lined the streets numbering in the thousands and cheered on the 57 separate entries that formed the parade's floats.

Sarnia—Lambton has a strong tradition of support for the local labour force and this was evident on September 5 as local unions were joined by the St. Clair Drum Line, members of the Sarnia Sting and Sarnia Braves baseball team and the mayor's 2010 honour list recipients. Eight trophies were presented to participants, including the Save the Sarnia Jail committee that won for best overall union float.

I send my congratulations for such a great success to the president of the Sarnia District Labour Council, June Maruschak and the chief organizer for the 2011 parade, Penny Jakubowski.

On behalf of Sarnia—Lambton, I extend my thanks.

* * *

PALESTINE

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the leader of the Palestinian Authority confirmed what had long been rumoured: the Palestinians intend to seek full membership and state recognition at the United Nations during this week's general assembly meetings.

I was proud to hear the Prime Minister say a very short time later that Canada would vote against such a move, calling it "not helpful" to the cause of peace. This is an attempt to circumvent the negotiation process. It will make a resumption of peace talks more difficult, raise expectations, yet not change the facts on the ground or improve lives and could lead to heightened frustrations. The result could be mass demonstrations or even another intifada. This will only contribute to regional instability.

Our government believes the only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is through negotiations between the parties. It is our hope negotiations can resume as soon as possible.

I am confident the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs will make Canada's views widely known in New York this week. Hon. members should be prepared to consider all options if this unilateral action succeeds.

* * *

● (1410)

WILLIAM COMMANDA

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on August 3, Algonquin Elder William Commanda passed away at the age of 97 at his home in Kitigan Zibi, near Maniwaki.

[Translation]

William Commanda was a pillar of our community. He was generous in sharing his wisdom. He was a visionary and an exceptional man. He leaves behind a legacy that will forever inspire us.

[English]

I extend my deepest condolences to Chief Gilbert Whiteduck, the grandfather's family, the Algonquin nation and his followers in Canada and abroad.

[Translation]

His wisdom, patience and sense of humour will be missed and, although he is no longer with us, his memory will help guide us as we pursue his quest for justice and peace in the world.

[English]

We thank Grandfather Commanda for his contributions.

Miigwetch.

ARCTICNET

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to tell the House about our government's latest commitment to northern environmental protection, a five-year renewal of funding for ArcticNet.

Last week the Minister of Industry announced a \$67 million contribution toward ArcticNet's research, which is focused on sustainable development, marine eco-systems, clean air and other challenges facing our north. Thanks to this commitment to ArcticNet, researchers and communities will be able to work together to better understand our northern environment, which is key to building a prosperous and environmentally protected north.

After years of neglect by the previous Liberal government, and despite the anti-development opposition of the NDP, our government, led by our Prime Minister, is acting to ensure that the north fulfills its true potential as a healthy, prosperous, environmentally-protected and secure region within a strong and sovereign Canada.

* * *

JACK LAYTON

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my late friend and colleague, Jack Layton, Leader of the Opposition and member of Parliament for Toronto—Danforth. He was my friend and my family's friend, but he was also every family's friend, especially those who long for social justice, economic security or simply recognition of their value in society.

We each have our own memories of Jack: how he reached out to us and touched us by his humanity; how he inspired us by his commitment and dedication; how he showed his compassion for people and his passion for showing others that there is a better way to do things. We remember how he loved people and how people loved him back.

In his letter to Canadians, he offers us the watch words of “love”, “hope” and “optimism”, his belief in young people and the future they can help us to create, and the conviction that we can succeed.

By his own life and his political career, he has shown us that it can be done and now it is up to us to make it happen.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since taking office, the Conservative government has been focusing on what matters to Canadians—creating jobs and promoting economic growth.

I am pleased that Canada has been ranked as having the soundest banks in the world for the fourth year in a row, and that nearly 600,000 net new jobs have been created since July 2009, the strongest growth record in the G-7.

Our economic recovery remains fragile and too many Canadians are still looking for work. That is why we are firmly focused on the implementation of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan—a low-tax plan for jobs and growth. We want to keep the Canadian

Statements by Members

economy on the right track with measures such as the hiring credit for small business.

* * *

[English]

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian children have returned to school but many of them are going to class hungry. Forty per cent of elementary students and 62% of secondary school students do not eat a nutritious breakfast. One in five Canadian children lives below the poverty line, which may lead to poor nutritional status and poor child health outcomes.

However, Canadian children from all income brackets are vulnerable to inadequate nutrition. Hungry children cannot learn. Their learning capabilities are affected by how recently they have eaten. Malnutrition in early life can limit long-term intellectual development.

Fortunately, school nutrition programs are highly effective in providing children with nutritious diets, better cognitive abilities and health. Unfortunately, Canada is one of the few developed countries without a national nutrition program.

Access to adequate food is a right of every individual. We must therefore fight for a national school nutrition program for all our children.

* * *

● (1415)

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this September, we commemorate the 71st anniversary of the Battle of Britain. As the first major battle fought primarily in the air and a turning point in the Second World War, the Battle of Britain remains a critical event in our past.

Britain looked to the skies for support and Canadians and the Royal Canadian Air Force were there. Our valiant airmen worked with British and allied forces to save Britain from invasion and pave the way for the liberation of Europe. When it became clear that the Royal Air Force would not buckle, the battle ended and Britain was safe.

Today, Canada remembers its heroes. We pay tribute to our history and honour the generation of Canadians who bravely served this country, as well as those who wear the Canadian uniform with pride today.

Not long ago, we revived the memory of Churchill's 'Few' as we reintroduced the Royal Canadian Air Force to Canada and our allies.

Oral Questions

As Canadians, we owe it to our veterans to honour their legacy, and watching the Hurricane and the Spitfire slip the surly bonds of earth over Ottawa on the weekend provided a beautiful and poignant reminder of that history and heritage.

Today, Canada remembers the veterans of the Battle of Britain. Lest we forget.

* * *

[Translation]

WILLIAM COMMANDA

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on August 3, 2011, a great man passed away. William Commanda, the spiritual leader of an international peace movement, the Circle of Nations, died at the age of 97.

In my riding of Pontiac, he was the chief of the Kitigan Zibi reserve from 1951 to 1970. He dedicated his entire life to protecting the environment and staunchly defending the rights of aboriginal peoples.

William Commanda was a trapper, a guide, a birch bark canoe craftsman, a chief and a spiritual leader who travelled around the world.

Mr. Commanda received a number of distinctions, including the lifetime achievement award from the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

My NDP colleagues and I offer our sincere condolences to Mr. Commanda's family and to the entire Algonquin Nation.

Rest in peace, Ojigkwanong.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to stay focused on what matters: helping to create jobs and promoting economic growth.

Canada's economy has created nearly 600,000 net new jobs since July 2009. It is the strongest job growth record in the G7. What is more, both the IMF and the OECD forecast Canada's economy will be among the strongest in the G7. Moody's recently renewed Canada's AAA credit rating due to our economic resiliency, very high government financial strength and a low susceptibility to event risk.

However, the global economic recovery is fragile and the last thing Canada's economy needs now is the NDP and Liberal massive job-killing tax hikes. Staying the course with our prudent low-tax plan will support Canada's economic recovery and help create jobs for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is still looking at the economy through rose-coloured glasses. Just as in 2008, he is refusing to see the signs. Scotiabank is warning that Canada is on the verge of another recession. Moody's is sounding the alarm about household debt. Investments are down and the government's solution is to slash services.

When will the Prime Minister take action to create jobs and avoid another economic crisis?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Hull—Aylmer on her first question as Leader of the Opposition.

The government's position is clear—the economy is our number one priority. The global economy is very fragile, as I said many times last year. We need to continue focusing our work on creating jobs through measures such as investing in research, all while keeping taxes low.

● (1420)

[English]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, unemployment rose in Canada. Our economy shed over 5,000 more jobs.

More and more Canadians are giving up because of the lack of job opportunities. To reach the same proportion of working Canadians as before the recession, we actually need to create 420,000 new jobs.

Canadians need a job strategy now. Where is the job plan?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to get her facts correct. There are more people working in Canada today than before the recession, the only advanced country where that is the case, and that is because the government remains focused on jobs. We are making targeted investments in the Canadian economy, in things like research and innovation, keeping taxes low, opening trade markets and, of course, ensuring we do not see the kind of deficit and debt problems in Canada that have caused this global recession throughout the world.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister created a structural deficit by giving the gift of tax cuts to big business, and he has not changed course. Contrary to what he says, these companies are not investing and are not creating jobs. A full \$500 billion is sitting in corporate coffers and could be used to create jobs. The Conservative strategy does not work.

Where are the investments? Where are the jobs?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more Canadians are working now than before the global recession. Canada is practically the only industrialized country to have achieved this, and that is because of our commitment to keeping taxes low, not only for companies, but also for individuals and families. This government clearly understands that raising taxes does not create jobs.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to face reality: unemployment is on the rise. Some 1.4 million Canadians are unemployed. The student unemployment rate this summer was over 17%.

Instead of wasting money on gifts for large corporations, when will the government introduce a job creation program?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly deal with my colleagues in the G7 regularly. We have a serious situation in Europe and some weakness in the U.S. economy.

However, the plain fact is that we are the envy of the advanced economies in the world with respect to job creation. We have created almost 600,000 net new jobs since the recession ended. More than that, 80% of those jobs are full-time jobs for Canadians. Our job record is second to none.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Conservatives have created is the largest deficit in Canadian history and they have still fallen short on job creation. Their strategy of something for nothing corporate tax giveaways has failed Canadians. Another 420,000 jobs would need to be created just to keep the same proportion of jobs we had before the 2008 recession.

Why will the finance minister not stop these reckless corporate giveaways? Why will he not target support for the real job creators?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know who the member opposite thinks the real job creators are other than small businesses in Canada that pay taxes. Does the member opposite think governments create jobs by hiring people in the public sector? It is the small businesses, which is why we have a hiring credit for small business in the budget this year. I hope the member will support the budget.

Our record with respect to job creation is among the best in the developed economies. We realize that our unemployment rate is still too high and that we need to keep working at it, but the way to get there is not to have a \$10 billion tax increase on business, which is what the opposition has suggested.

• (1425)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through all the rhetoric, a few facts emerge which I think Canadians will all understand. The first fact is that 1.4 million people are officially unemployed and there are many hundreds of thousands of others who have been discouraged from working.

The second fact is that the economy contracted in the last quarter and the economy right now clearly is not growing. Those are undeniable facts.

Last year, the government produced an economic statement on October 12. Would the Prime Minister commit that he will introduce

an economic statement and that it will deal directly with the jobs crisis in Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member will know well, we just had an election where the government made it very clear that it will continue with its priorities on the economy. Its priority is to create jobs and growth.

Obviously, we have a fundamental difference here with the opposition of all stripes. We understand that jobs cannot be created by raising taxes. We will keep taxes low in this country as part of our job creation strategy.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refuses to face the facts, which are very simple: the state of the economy is not what it was back in June or what it was in May. The economy is currently contracting here in Canada, in the United States and in Europe.

I will ask the Prime Minister again: will he commit here today to ensuring that Canadians receive a clear economic statement from the Minister of Finance before October 12?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has a very clear economic policy that is recognized around the world. As I have repeated many times, the global economy, the global recovery, remains very fragile. Of course this means that Canada does face some serious risks and this government will act appropriately at all times. Once again, we cannot create jobs with the kind of debt that exists in other countries, in Europe and the United States. These debts are one of the major problems causing the global recession. We do not want to have such policies here.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government leaked the other day the fact that the deal on the perimeter security deal has now been inked between the United States and Canada. We now have just learned that President Obama's plan for reinvestment in the United States includes several buy American provisions that will cost Canada tens of thousands of jobs when it comes to infrastructure in North America.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister how the government could possibly have signed any kind of agreement or come to any kind of agreement with respect to perimeter security and at the same time allow the administration in the United States to carry on direct discrimination against our country?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I have inked a deal with the United States I certainly do not remember doing it.

The fact is that this is an important initiative to sustain, not just our security but obviously our access to the American market on which so many Canadian jobs are based.

Oral Questions

The member will also know that the Minister of International Trade has been very strong in saying that we certainly do not support the protectionist measures that are included in the latest American bill as we have opposed those in the past and will continue to do so. When we do so on this side, we do so as the only party that has an unadulterated record of commitment to free trade.

* * *

G8-G20 SUMMITS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians trust the Auditor General to protect their hard-earned tax dollars. After all, it was the Auditor General who exposed the Liberal sponsorship scheme.

I have a simple question for the President of the Treasury Board. If any bureaucrats, political staffers or even ministers attempted to keep the Auditor General in the dark or mislead her about the spending and misspending of money around the G8, would the minister not agree that would constitute a very serious breach of public trust?

• (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we have from that member and from the New Democratic Party the same old, same old.

Let me tell you this very directly, Mr. Speaker. Canadians spoke out against this type of politics and these types of attacks in the last election. They voted for a government that would make job creation and economic growth a priority and that is exactly what this government is doing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Auditor General tried to investigate the \$50 million in pork barrel spending in Muskoka, she was unable to find a paper trail because she was not told that the projects were run through the member's constituency office and was not told that senior bureaucrats participated. It was NDP researchers, with the help of honest municipal councillors in Muskoka, who broke the code of silence.

Who directed these bureaucrats to keep silent and who told them to show such disrespect for the Canadian taxpayer?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new here. What I can say is that 32 projects were funded by Infrastructure Canada. There were 32 different contribution agreements for each project. All of these projects were finished on time and on budget and every dollar was accounted for.

We appreciated the good advice we received from the Auditor General on ways we could be even more transparent and do things better.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that some deputy ministers provided inaccurate statements to the Auditor General.

The Foreign Affairs summit management office said it was not involved in examining project funding and yet we have learned today that this is not true. One senior deputy minister was a member of the local area leadership group.

Did the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Foreign Affairs instruct their officials to hide their involvement in managing the fund?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the 2008 election campaign, the current President of the Treasury Board chaired meetings of the local area leadership group. He headed up a group that would spend considerable amounts of money in his riding, at a time when he was running for office.

Can the minister explain why he felt it was appropriate or even normal to chair meetings of the local area leadership group in the middle of an election campaign?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the same old, same old. There is nothing new here whatsoever.

The Auditor General came forward with her report and we thank her for her work. She came forward with specific recommendations on how we could be even more transparent to Parliament, specific recommendations on improving program administration. The good news is that 32 public infrastructure projects were all constructed. They all came in on or under budget and they are all public infrastructure benefits that will benefit the people of that region for many years to come.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was kept in the dark about the minister's homemade funding process. Deputy ministers signed off on inaccurate statements. The summit management office was misleading about its involvement with funding meetings and the minister went ahead with these slush fund meetings in the middle of an election campaign. Allocating funding out of the back rooms of constituency offices is not ethical government.

Will the minister finally apologize to Canadians for this abuse of their trust?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I only have 35 seconds and I could not possibly go through every inaccuracy in the member's question.

There were 32 different contribution agreements all signed to support 32 infrastructure projects. All of those infrastructure projects are public. They all came in on or under budget and they will benefit the people of that region for many years to come.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, FedNor employees were involved in the \$50 million personal spending project of the President of the Treasury Board.

The minister asked the region's mayors to provide feedback on the funding criteria.

Let us be clear: the mayors were asked to set the criteria for money they would receive.

Will the minister clarify his involvement and that of FedNor employees in the management of this slush fund?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government provides infrastructure support to every province and territory and to all kinds of municipalities from coast to coast to coast.

The good news is that because of those infrastructure projects we saw economic growth, more jobs, more hope and more opportunity, which is why Canada is leading the world in the G7, why our economy is among the strongest of the industrialized nations and why the Minister of Finance was named the best minister of finance last year.

* * *

● (1435)

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative ministers are developing quite a passion for the use of high-flying government jets. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Defence make particular liberal use of the jets. The Prime Minister says that everything is fine because he pays the paltry equivalent of a commercial airline ticket.

Why have the Conservatives abandoned their commitment to respect taxpayers dollars when it comes to jetting around the country?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to throw a few facts into the mix, the policy for the Prime Minister and all ministers requires that commercial travel be utilized for public business, the government aircraft being used when commercial travel is not available.

I would remind the member opposite that when it comes to the liberal use of this aircraft, the Conservative government has reduced the average annual spending of the ministers' Challenger flights by approximately 80% over the previous Liberal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Conservatives like to fly. Unlike them, few Canadians have the opportunity to fly to Boston to watch a hockey game or to Tim Hortons for a coffee. In the case of some ministers, travel by private jet has increased by 50%. We would prefer to see such an increase in the use of public transportation.

Can the government come up with a better excuse to justify this use than saying that the Liberals did worse?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there they go making things up. The reality is that the jets are used for government business. They are used when commercial flights are not available. We have reduced the amount of time in which the jets are being used. They are used for another very important purpose, which is for medivacs for the Canadian Forces.

Oral Questions

These were aircraft that were purchased in the 1980s. The most recent aircraft was purchased in the 1990s. These aircraft are part of a fleet of aircraft owned and operated by the government but operated under the auspices of the Canadian Forces.

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CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the Chief of the Defence Staff's recent taxpayer-funded trips to events such as football games, hockey games and the Calgary Stampede have shocked Canadians. The government is now planning significant cuts to the Canadian Forces.

Will the Conservative austerity plan only apply to soldiers, sailors and airmen and women and not to the brass? Why did the Minister of National Defence approve over \$1 million of flights to be taken by the Chief of the Defence Staff?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has outlined the rules under which ministers use government aircraft. I have spoken to the Chief of the Defence Staff. He understands what those expectations are and is certainly prepared to live according to those rules.

As members know, the Chief of the Defence Staff does fly very frequently on government business, but obviously where there are alternatives we will look into that usage.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that 1.4 million Canadians are out of work, which is 300,000 more unemployed Canadians than just three years ago. That does not include the Canadians who have given up on looking for work altogether.

With so many Canadians out of work, will the finance minister use the opportunity of the fall economic statement to introduce a real plan to create and save Canadian jobs?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite and his party will support the budget measures that include the hiring tax credit for business in Canada. That would give 525,000 small businesses an opportunity to hire more people in Canada, which is important. We have put a limit on the rate of increase of the employment insurance payments by employers.

Our tax reductions introduced in 2007 continue. That helped create jobs. We have continuing infrastructure programs, plus work sharing. There is a lot of government activity in the economy today and that is why we have 400,000 net new—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the results of the plebiscite make it clear that farmers want the Canadian Wheat Board to stay. From the *Regina Leader-Post* in 2009, I quote:

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Well, farmers have spoken. We recognize that, at this time and place, this is what farmers are asking for and we'll certainly work to make sure that the board delivers for them in the best way possible.

Who said that? It was the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

The law is clear, and farmers have spoken again. Why does he not honour the will of farmers, heed his own words and keep the Wheat Board?

• (1440)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers in western Canada always love to hear someone from Ontario, which has a voluntary board, give them advice.

I will quote the CWB director for district 2: "It's a glorified survey. We've admitted that it's not binding. We accept that."

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am from the Prairies. The Prairie grain farmers in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta have indeed spoken. They want to retain the Canadian Wheat Board.

I appeal to the Prime Minister, who claims to be an MP from the Prairies. Why will he not stand up for the Prairie farmers and guarantee that we will have the Canadian Wheat Board well into the future?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is interesting to have a question from a member who does not have, to my knowledge, a single farmer in his riding.

Let us talk about the facts. In this so-called plebiscite, not only did a significant portion vote against the Wheat Board, but it did not include those tens of thousands of farmers who have walked away from that institution.

The Wheat Board gets to pick its own voters. I guess if they could do that over there, the Liberal Party could even win an election in the west.

The fact of the matter is that western farmers voted for marketing freedom, and that is what they are going to get.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is planning to spend billions more on corporate tax giveaways, but it cannot find money to help address the crisis of crumbling infrastructure. Just this summer, Montrealers were shocked when a section of Highway 720 collapsed. Luckily, no one was injured.

It is long past time to act. Canadians are at risk. Why is the government now cutting back on infrastructure spending?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never in the history of the country has a government invested more in infrastructure than this one. Most of the time, this MP's party voted against it, so it is very interesting to hear this now.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the government is cutting infrastructure spending.

[Translation]

The government has to stop shirking its responsibilities and start taking the necessary measures to help the greater Montreal area. Modernizing Montreal's infrastructure cannot wait. The city's economic future depends on it.

Will the government take this opportunity to promote sustainable development, carpooling and public transit?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something that is very important to our government is respecting jurisdictions. My colleague should know that in Quebec, every decision to invest in infrastructure is the responsibility of the Government of Quebec, except for when it comes to the three bridges that are owned by the federal government. We will talk about that again later I am sure.

When the time comes to invest in Quebec's infrastructure, we will do so by respecting municipal priorities and the provincial government, as we do in every province in the country. And we will continue to do so.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to prove that the economy is indeed its priority. The infrastructure problems in the greater Montreal area are having a major economic impact. The Champlain Bridge has reached the end of its life. Yet the government is looking for excuses not to replace it.

Will the government do its duty and protect the city's economy? This is a national issue. Will the government announce the construction of a new bridge immediately?

• (1445)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2009, we have invested \$379 million in Montreal bridges, mainly in the Champlain Bridge, to ensure the smooth flow of traffic and further enhance the safety of this infrastructure. The majority of the party opposite voted against this. It is interesting to hear what they have to say today.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we now know that, from 2008 to 2011, the people who were using the Mercier Bridge were in real danger even before the bridge closed this summer. This is not only an economic issue but also one of public safety. It is irresponsible to play with the safety of motorists, truckers and public transit users.

Will the government do the right thing today so that people can travel safely?

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify. A total of \$135 million has been invested in the federal part of the Mercier Bridge. Work that had been planned for several years was completed this summer. The Government of Quebec is continuing to do its work. The comments today pertain to the provincial part of the Mercier Bridge. We will continue to ensure that federal bridges in the Montreal area are in good condition and meet the needs of the population.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the serious and ongoing issue of anti-Semitism in the international community.

The Conservative government has been a global leader in combating anti-Semitism. It has, for example, been the first government anywhere in the world to announce that it would not participate in the commemoration of the Durban declaration.

My question to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism is the following: could he advise the House as to any other actions the government is taking to fight anti-Semitism?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank that member, as well as the member for Mount Royal and Mr. Silva, the former member for Davenport, for their leadership in the parliamentary coalition for combating anti-Semitism and their excellent work, as well as for helping us to coordinate the global summit of parliamentarians here in January, which led to the Ottawa Protocol.

I am pleased to announce that this evening the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I will, on behalf of Canada, be the first government in the world to sign the Ottawa Protocol, indicating that Canada will continue to take a leadership role in combating all forms of anti-Semitism, including the scourge of the new anti-Semitism, which seeks to target and vilify the collective Jews of the state of Israel.

We stand in solidarity with the Jewish people and their democratic state.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no business case for abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board. It is an ideological crusade, plain and simple.

Now a clear majority of Canadian grain producers have voted to keep the single desk monopoly of the Wheat Board.

I argue that the minister is both duty bound and honour bound to uphold the democratic will of Prairie grain producers and to respect the very act that defines his ministry, which guarantees a vote of Prairie producers before the government interferes with their ability to market their grain.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the plebiscite that the Wheat Board undertook left out a glaring hole in the middle: the right for farmers to voluntarily choose where they should market their grain.

That is a right that we have campaigned on. May 2 saw a result, giving us the authority to move forward on that.

We certainly intend to do that and to give those farmers the right and the opportunity to market their commodities at a time, place and price that they see fit, the same as their cousins in Ontario.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our American neighbours certainly see the benefit in the Canadian Wheat Board to Canadian farmers, because 13 times they have gone to the WTO and trade tribunals to complain that it is an unfair competitive advantage.

Now our Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board will do the Americans' dirty work for them.

My question is simple: what side is the minister on? Why is he standing up for the American agrifood giants and not standing up for Canadian grain producers, who benefit from the Canadian Wheat Board?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me quote one of the farmers from western Canada:

It is no accident that North Dakota has five pasta plants whereas Manitoba and Saskatchewan have none. We will continue to export jobs from the prairies unless entrepreneurs are given the chance to buy grain freely from farmers.

That is the crux of this. We saw the Australian model opening up their wheat board some three years ago. When I met with the Minister of Trade from Australia at the Cairns Group last week, he said that the only mistake they made was not doing it sooner.

We look to that model. It has been very positive for the farmers in Australia. We know the farmers in western Canada will follow that same model and have a much better chance of prosperity.

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● (1450)

MEMBER FOR MISSISSAUGA—ERINDALE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs serves a very important position which requires professionalism and discretion.

Recent events have become a distraction. There are unanswered questions about the parliamentary secretary's judgment and potential security concerns.

My question is, will the parliamentary secretary step aside from his responsibilities until the situation is investigated?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Mississauga—Erindale has denied any inappropriate behaviour. We, of course, have found no information to suggest otherwise.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, foreign affairs must be taken much more seriously. While the Minister of Foreign Affairs is looking after portraits of the Queen and his parliamentary secretary is looking after his personal life, who is looking after this country's foreign affairs? In the case of the parliamentary secretary, we have been told that an investigation took place behind closed doors and that the member did nothing wrong.

Could the opposition have a copy of the report that was produced?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely sure what this has to do with government business and I do not know what inquiries into people's personal lives have to do with the new tone of decorum.

The member for Mississauga—Erindale has been quite clear in his statement. He denied any inappropriate behaviour. There is no information to suggest otherwise.

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*[Translation]***QUEBEC**

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with his hand on his heart, the Minister of Industry promised that GST harmonization with Quebec would be resolved by September 15. It is now September 19 and the government has pulled the plug on the new unit in Bagotville, there is no more funding for the Saint-Rédempteur viaduct in Lévis, and we are still waiting for a new Champlain Bridge.

Why has the government written off Quebec? Is it because Quebecers did not vote the right way, or is it the influence of the Prime Minister's new communications director? Why are they turning their backs on Quebecers?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that question should go back to the member for Bourassa. Nothing happened for 10 years. That government created a fiscal imbalance and always refused the possibility of tax harmonization. We gave Quebec a seat at UNESCO, we resolved the fiscal imbalance that they created, and we recognized the Quebec nation. And there is more to come, unlike what the previous government did.

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G8 SUMMIT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not understand how money allocated by Parliament to improve border infrastructure could have been used to build gazebos and washrooms that had nothing to do with the G8 summit. Even the Auditor General agrees that this matter is very troubling.

Since the Conservatives like to boast about accountability and claim to have nothing to hide, will they allow the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates to review how the funds were allocated?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact we have done more than that. We have had a review of this issue by the Auditor General. She came forward and made several recommendations on how we can be even more transparent to Parliament. We have accepted all those recommendations.

I would say to the member opposite that this is the same old type of tactic that Canadians rejected in the last election. Canadians want their parliamentarians and their government to be focused on jobs, economic growth and economic opportunity. That is exactly what this government will continue to focus on.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians learned that the Minister of the Environment has had second thoughts about regulating the oil sands industry. It turns out he needs more time to consult with the oil industry.

Will the minister explain to Canadians why he has decided to take his sweet time, when the government is already set to miss its own inadequate 2020 emissions targets by a whopping 75%?

● (1455)

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague's question.

We do have a plan, and our plan is working. As my colleague knows full well, we began with a sector-by-sector regulatory approach a year ago, starting with the transportation sector, which is the greatest emitter of greenhouse gases. I have just posted in *Canada Gazette*, part I, new regulations for the coal-fired electricity sector, and we will proceed sector by sector from here around the wheel of priorities.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government had nothing better to do this summer than to cut 800 jobs from Environment Canada. Those cuts were made in a sector of strategic importance to our economy, our social development and our future. They will have serious repercussions on Canadians.

What analyses were used to measure the impact of these cuts on Canadians?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must correct the hon. member's numbers.

[English]

There has been a great deal of misreporting and uninformed comment on this issue. There is a great difference between 776 permanent employees who might be affected, 300 positions which will be declared surplus, and the much-smaller actual number of employees who may eventually be separated from the department. None of the core services of Environment Canada will be compromised. The environment remains—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

AIR CANADA

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 16, the union representing Air Canada flight attendants served 72 hours' notice to strike, a strike that could take place at 12:01 Wednesday morning.

Because Air Canada plays such a vital role in the Canadian economy, could the Minister of Labour please give the House an update on the status of the labour negotiations at Air Canada?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in cases like this the best solution is always the one that parties reach themselves. To that effect, both officials and I have been engaged with the parties.

We have received strike notice, as the member said and we are very concerned that a disruption of the air service will damage Canada's economic recovery. Canadians gave our government a very strong mandate with respect to the economic recovery and they want us to focus on the economy. That is why, if there is a work stoppage, we will act to protect Canada's economy.

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SERVICE CANADA

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives intend to cut 120 Service Canada processing centres down to 22 over the next 3 years. The government's plan to shift jobs out of rural areas with high unemployment into urban centres makes no sense. Canada's economy remains fragile, while the government remains illogical. The Service Canada cuts will result in the loss of well-paying jobs in rural Canada, jobs we cannot afford to lose.

At a time when Canadians need their government most, why does the government continue to cut, cut, cut instead of focusing on jobs, jobs, jobs?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a couple of aspects to that. During the global recession, the number of applications for employment insurance really spiked. To ensure Canadians got their EI payments in a timely manner, we hired additional temporary workers. Those workers knew that the jobs were temporary and so did their unions.

The good news is that thanks to our economic action plan, we are leading the world in job creation. There are not as many applications for EI so we do not need those temporary workers anymore.

Therefore, we are honouring our commitment to taxpayers to use their dollars wisely.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have learned about these cuts to Service Canada and we know that these jobs are very important in terms of speeding up the processing of employment insurance claims. We know there continues to be a backlog in many areas around Canada.

Therefore, will the minister explain to out-of-work Canadians why the Conservatives are making it harder to access a program that Canadians have paid into?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that

Oral Questions

Canadians do access the services to which they are entitled in an effective and efficient manner. We have a mandate from the Canadian people to ensure we provide our services efficiently. Up until now, it has been mostly done by paper. Therefore, we are trying to take a giant leap forward into the 21st century and we are automating a lot of this because it is a more responsive and responsible way to deal with things.

No Service Canada in-person services are being cut through this program because we want to ensure we are responsive to Canadians so they get their payments quickly, accurately and in a responsible way regarding their taxpayer dollars.

* * *

• (1500)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast were horrified when Kienan Hebert was abducted from his home in Sparwood in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. No family should ever have to endure the kind of fear and uncertainty felt by the Hebert family when its son was taken from it. To the great joy and relief of everyone involved, Kienan was returned safely.

Our government is committed to keeping our streets and communities safe and to protecting our most vulnerable. Would the Minister of Justice please inform the House on how the government is acting to strengthen Canada's justice system and keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia for his interest in this. We all join in wishing Kienan Hebert safety now that he is back with his family.

We have taken concrete steps to protect Canada's most vulnerable. We have raised the age of consent from 14 to 16, strengthening sentencing provisions for dangerous offenders. We believe those who commit violent crimes should serve sentences which reflect the severity of their crimes.

I am proud to be part of a government that puts victims first. Canadians know they can count on this government.

* * *

WATERFRONT TORONTO

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, the Governments of Canada, Ontario and Toronto jointly created and funded the agency Waterfront Toronto for the purpose, in part, of developing Toronto's Port Lands in a socially and environmentally responsible way.

Waterfront Toronto's plan is ready for implementation after rigorous consultation with the citizens of the city. Now the mayor of Toronto is seeking to take control of the agency and implement his own plan.

Routine Proceedings

Could the Minister of Finance confirm his commitment to Waterfront Toronto and to sticking with its current plan for the Port Lands?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only can I confirm the commitment of the federal government, in fact, the commitment was \$500 million and about \$492 million of that money has been spent. In fact, most of the projects that have gone ahead, including Mimico Park, Canada's Sugar Beach and the Sherbourne Park, were done primarily with federal money on the Toronto waterfront. Therefore, we have supported the Waterfront Toronto project throughout its time of advancing.

I understand that the mayor of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto are having some discussions and I expect that they will come to an amicable resolution.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government said this week that he fully intends to reintroduce the bill to change the composition of the House of Commons by increasing the number of seats, describing Quebec's concerns over its decreasing political weight as "horse trading".

Does the Prime Minister agree with his House leader? Is that how much respect the government has for the nation of Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, each Canadian vote, to the greatest extent possible, should carry equal weight. We will be taking reasonable and measured action to restore fair representation in the House of Commons, including protecting Quebec's constitutionally-enshrined representation.

Unlike the opposition, we are governing for all Canadians and we will pursue what is fair and principled.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Kevin Falcon, Minister of Finance in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 28 of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, it is my duty to present to the House the report of the Ethics Commissioner on an inquiry into Helena Guergis, former member for Simcoe—Grey.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1505)

[English]

SHARED VISION FOR PERIMETER SECURITY AND ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, two reports summarizing consultations on the Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness. These reports were made available to the public on August 29, 2011.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 22 petitions.

* * *

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-266, An Act to establish Pope John Paul II Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville to introduce my first private member's bill in the 41st Parliament. The bill is an act to establish Pope John Paul II day.

Pope John Paul II was born in Poland on May 18, 1920 and died in Rome on April 2, 2005. He was elected as the 264th Pope and Bishop of Rome on October 16, 1978. He was a pope who was hailed as the people's pope. He visited Canada in 1984, 1987 and in 2002. He established World Youth Day in 1985. Despite his increasing age and frailty, Pope John Paul II continued to travel and visited 129 nations during 104 trips abroad.

Pope John Paul II humanized the papacy and managed to connect with thousands from different religions that gathered wherever he visited. He helped end communism in eastern Europe and made a great contribution to world peace and freedom.

At his end, millions, including many Canadians, went to Rome affirming the last time how greatly he had altered the nature of the papacy and the world's expectations of a pope.

His Holiness John Paul II was a people's pope and this bill recognizes this and his contribution to Canadians and all people in the world.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADA WATER PRESERVATION ACT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-267, An Act respecting the preservation of Canada's water resources.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I think this is the third time I have introduced this bill, going back a few years. I am hoping that this time it will make it through the legislative process. Essentially, it is a bill to enable the federal government, along with the provinces, to become part of the process of making water in Canada a public trust. More specifically, it is a bill that would keep water in its natural basin thereby preventing large diversions of water from one basin to another in Canada and, by extension, outside of Canada.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1510)

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on funeral arrangements).

He said: Mr. Speaker, every family in this country goes through the death of a relative, a loved one or a friend. The average cost of a funeral in this country is \$10,000 and it is simply unconscionable for the federal government to tax that.

I have been reintroducing this bill since 1998. It is now 13 years in the making. I hope the federal government will understand this time that a tax on funerals is simply unconscionable, un-Canadian and immoral.

I am asking the federal government to remove the GST portion on all funeral and crematorium services.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (community service group membership dues).

He said: Mr. Speaker, no government can do everything for all of its citizens.

I could not help but notice that His Honour, the esteemed Governor General of Canada, stated yesterday in the media that we needed to do more for community service groups and volunteers in this country.

The basic premise of the bill would allow volunteers of an organized group, such as the Lion's Club, the Legion, the Kiwanis Club, rotarians, volunteer firefighters, et cetera, who provide 250 hours or more of service a year to claim a \$1,000 tax deduction at the end of the year. We believe this would help offset some of the costs faced by volunteers across this country.

I should remind the House that in Nova Scotia alone, volunteerism equates to \$2 billion of assistance to our economy. We can imagine what it is like in Ontario, Quebec and other larger provinces.

This is a repetitive bill that I have had in the House for over 13 years. I am hopeful that this time the government will see the merits of this legislation and pass it almost immediately.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Routine Proceedings

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-270, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Passport Services Fees Regulations (passports for veterans, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and their spouses or common-law partners, and seniors).

He said: Mr. Speaker, throughout the years, many members of the military and the RCMP have asked if it would be at all possible to have their passports and those of their immediate spouses issued free of charge as a benefit for their service. These individuals travel across the country and serve abroad many times. It would be a wonderful benefit to our men and women of the service and the RCMP. Allowing them to obtain a passport free of charge would go a long way toward thanking them for their invaluable service to this country.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INTERNET CHILD PORNOGRAPHY PREVENTION ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-271, An Act to prevent the use of the Internet to distribute pornographic material involving children.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the genesis of the bill goes back to 1995 with the hon. Chris Axworthy, who was a New Democratic Party member of Parliament and who then became the justice minister and attorney general of Saskatchewan.

We have noticed that the government recently adopted small parts of this bill into its crime legislation, which we greatly appreciate, but it honestly does not go far enough.

What is on the Internet right now when it comes to the abuse of our children is unconscionable. I am sure I speak for all members of Parliament when I say that using the Internet to persuade and attract children for nefarious means for the pedophile industry is simply unconscionable. We must do all that we can to ensure that the Internet is not an evil means by which these people can perpetrate their deeds.

This bill, which has great support from police officers across the country, would go a long way in deterring that action in this country.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1515)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-272, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (compassionate care benefits).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, you and your wife have children and, if you both work outside the home, one of you can take a year off in maternity or paternity leave. What happens if a couple has a seven-year-old child who is diagnosed with cancer and has four months to live? What are parents prepared to do? That is a very difficult decision. Do they leave their places of employment to care for their loved ones? Of course they do. Will their employers keep their jobs for them when they return? We do not know.

The fact is that no one should have to go through that alone. We in the NDP believe in using the unemployment insurance system for what we call eternity leave for up to six months to allow someone the opportunity to take time off work to care for a dying relative on a compassionate basis or on a severe rehabilitative basis.

I notice that the hon. Jane Stewart, the former minister of social services back in 1999-2000, adopted part of this bill for six weeks and then the hon. Belinda Stronach extended it to eight weeks. We believe that is just not enough time. If it were increased up to six months, it would go a long way in assisting families when dealing with a very serious crisis in their lives.

We believe that of all the bills I have introduced, this one should pass immediately. It should be passed this afternoon, go to the Senate, over to the Governor General and be in law by tomorrow.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-273, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cyberbullying).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to reintroduce my private member's bill, which is an act to amend sections 264, 298 and 372 of the Criminal Code in order to clarify that cyberbullying is an offence. Cyberbullying is a problem that touches over half of Canada's youth, whether they witness bullying, are victims or are bullies themselves.

In a recent study by the University of Toronto, 50% of surveyed students reported that they had been bullied online and this insidious form of online bullying can follow youth through their whole lives.

This bill has the support of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and most media and other levels of communication are included under sections of this bill. It is time to add electronic communication.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-274, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (animal cruelty).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce this important legislation that would amend the Criminal Code by consolidating animal cruelty offences and increasing the maximum penalties for this type of offence.

For over 10 years Parliament has debated this issue and has never adequately addressed it. This bill reflects the contribution of animal welfare groups, many in the animal use industry, and members from both Houses. This bill, in previous incarnations, has been passed in the House on two separate occasions. I look forward to working with all parties for its swift passage.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS ACT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-275, An Act to amend the Hazardous Products Act (recreational snow sport helmets).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce for the fourth time my private member's bill entitled An Act to amend the Hazardous Products Act (recreational snow sport helmets), which would ban the advertising, sale and import of unsafe ski and snowboard helmets in Canada that do not have CSA approval.

This is not only a good medical and safety issue, it is good public policy. It is estimated that recreational head injuries cost Canadian taxpayers over \$100 million each year. Fifty per cent to 88% of acquired brain injuries happen because of this kind of unsafe helmet use.

My bill would ensure that Canadians have the headgear protection that is actually safe. This does not need to be debated in the House. It just needs an order in council to allow for CSA-approved helmets to be used.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1520)

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-276, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression).

The bill adds gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code sections regarding hate crimes and sentencing provisions providing explicit protection to transgender and transsexual Canadians from discrimination in all areas of federal jurisdiction. It would give transsexual and transgender Canadians direct access to the protections provided for in the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code of Canada.

As many of my colleagues may know, the bill was passed by the House in the previous Parliament when it was sponsored by former MP, Bill Siksay. Given that the House has previously approved the legislation, I look forward to working with my colleagues to once again pass this urgently needed legislation, as Australia has recently done.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-277, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a bill that would further amend the Criminal Code to add a new section for animal cruelty offences. Laws on animal cruelty have not been updated substantially in this country since the Victorian era. It is time that we close the loopholes in the Criminal Code that allow perpetrators of animal cruelty crimes to go free because we know that these crimes are also linked with other crimes against humans.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations on the following motion. I move:

That, during its consideration of matters pursuant to Standing Order 83.1, the Standing Committee on Finance be authorized to adjourn from place to place within Canada and to permit the broadcasting of its proceedings thereon, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24, 28, 32, 38, 44, 46, 51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, 66, 68, 71, 73, 76, 77, 80, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 97, 99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 108 and 109.

[Text]

Question No. 1—**Mr. Bruce Hyer:**

With regard to corporate taxation, what is the total amount of deferred corporate taxes for the tax years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, (CRA).

The CRA is unable to provide a response in the manner requested.

Deferred corporate taxes, reported on corporation's financial statements, are captured in CRA's CORTAX database. The database is used to capture information from T2 corporate income tax returns and to administer corporate income tax.

Routine Proceedings

However, corporations are able to file amended returns and financial statements to request a reassessment, and this may include a revision to their financial statement data, including deferred income taxes. This type of taxpayer-requested adjustment can initiate changes on multiple tax years. Therefore, there is no definite point at which data can be considered final for any given tax year.

A data analysis of the amounts presently captured in the CRA's database determined that a representative amount of deferred corporate taxes by tax year cannot be provided.

Question No. 16—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to declining fish stocks in Atlantic Canada, especially in the Gulf Region, and the predatory effects of seals thereon: (a) does the government intend to increase the quota for the culling of the harp seal and the grey seal herds to mitigate the seals' impact on fish stocks; (b) what are the numbers of harp and grey seals harvested during this year's hunt in (i) the Gulf Region, (ii) off the waters of Newfoundland; (c) what do the numbers in (b)(i) and (ii) represent as a percentage of the total allowable catch (TAC) for both areas; (d) given declining levels of sea ice in the Gulf Region, does the government intend to allow seals to be hunted on land in the future; (e) what is the projected TAC for the 2012 seal hunt; (f) what is the best price for seal pelts in 2011; and (g) what is the expected best price for seal pelts in 2012?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in recent years, the government has been examining the impacts of seal predation on Atlantic fish stocks. In 2010, a workshop was held that provided data on the correlation between grey seal diets and the recovery of cod stocks in the southern gulf. Findings from this Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat exercise showed that in area 4T, grey seals are considered a significant source of mortality for large cod over 35cm. More studies need to be done to assess the impact seals are having on fish stocks in other areas.

In response to (a), the current management objective is to maintain the seal population at 70% of the largest population seen. Seal populations will continue to be managed accordingly.

In response to (b)(i), in the gulf region, 2,547 harp seals and 195 grey seals were harvested this year; and in response to (b)(ii), in Newfoundland and Labrador, 35,483 harp seals were harvested off the Front, eastern Newfoundland, including gulf Newfoundland, western.

In response to (c), as a percentage of total allowable catch, (b)(i) the gulf region, that is Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, harvested 6% of their allocation, not including Gulf Newfoundland quota, for harp seals and less than 1% of the total allowable catch for grey seals. In response to (b)(ii), Newfoundland and Labrador harvested 10% of their allocation, gulf and Front/Labrador quotas.

Routine Proceedings

In response to (d), it is current practice that grey seals can be harvested both on land and in the water in the Gulf Region. Grey seals haul out on ice or on land to birth their pups, and commercial harvests of grey seals take place on various islands and along the coast around the Maritimes.

In response to (e), the total allowable catch for the 2012 season for all species of seals has yet to be determined. The herds are currently quite healthy. The quota is determined based on science advice, socio-economic concerns and through consultations with regional advisory committees as well as an Atlantic-wide advisory committee meeting, which typically is held in early January to discuss the upcoming harvests. The recommendations of science and stakeholders are then provided to the minister to make a decision on upcoming total allowable catches for the year.

In response to (f), processors set the price for seal pelts, which averaged between \$20 to \$25 for the 2011 season. This price is set according to market conditions and the quality of the pelts.

In response to (g), Fisheries and Oceans Canada has no means of knowing what the price for pelts will be for the 2012 season. Prices for pelts are set by the market and based on demand and availability.

Question No. 19—Mr. Malcolm Allen:

With regard to the next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan: (a) how much funding will be allocated from April 1, 2011, until April 1, 2015; (b) what departments and agencies will be responsible for the Plan's implementation; and (c) how much money will be allocated to each department and agency to implement the next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, the annual net fiscal cost of new measures announced in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, as well as savings measures with positive fiscal impacts, can be located in table 5.5 and table 5.6 on pages 191-192 of the budget 2011 document. Note: the period in question, April 1, 2011 to April 1, 2015, corresponds to fiscal years 2011-12 to 2014-15. For more information, please visit the Government of Canada website on the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, www.budget.gc.ca. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan involves the work of numerous federal departments and agencies to implement the announced measures. Specific details of departmental appropriations related to budget 2011 measures are determined following the tabling of the budget, as departments come forward to Treasury Board and, ultimately, to Parliament to seek spending authority.

Question No. 20—Mr. Malcolm Allen

With regard to the operating budget freeze at the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid off as of April 1, 2011; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees have been hired since April 1, 2011; and (e) what programs received funding cuts as of April 1, 2011?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, AAFC, closely monitored all operating expenses and reported on them monthly to the senior management of the department.

Budget 2010 announced two significant actions to reduce the rate of growth in operating expenditures.

First, any salary and wage increases set in the Expenditure Restraint Act and in collective agreements for fiscal year 2010-11 until the end of fiscal year 2012-13 are to be absorbed by organizations. No moneys were provided to AAFC to fund the 1.5 per cent increase in annual wages for the federal public administration. AAFC is required to reallocate the resources from its operating budgets to fund these increases. Funding that was already provided in the department's reference levels for these increases was returned to Treasury Board Secretariat through supplementary estimates.

The department has a staffing realignment board that reviews and approves all external staffing requests to ensure that people are matched to priorities within available financial resources.

Salaries are monitored monthly by each branch against established maximum salary budgets. Second, operating budgets for fiscal year 2011-12 have been frozen at the 2010-11 levels. A subsequent freeze of operating budgets at those same levels is anticipated for fiscal year 2012-13.

To this end, additional measures were instituted that focused on travel, hospitality, and conferences. Employees have been advised of best practices related to travel in an effort to reduce the associated costs, for example, encouraging the use of video conferencing, use of the online booking tool, and booking of travel well in advance to take advantage of reduced-rate tickets.

In response to (b), during the 2010-11 fiscal year, 483 indeterminate employees, 462 full-time and 21 part-time, were lost to attrition at AAFC.

In response to (c), during the 2010-11 fiscal year, no employees were laid off at AAFC.

In response to (d), between April 1, 2011, and June 12, 2011, 71 indeterminate employees, 71 full-time and zero part-time, were hired at AAFC.

In response to (e), as previously mentioned in paragraph (a), the spending measures resulting from the budget 2010 announcement are affecting operating budgets in 2011-12 and apply across all programs.

Question No. 23—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With regard to Telus violations of the Do Not Call List and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) Alternate Case Resolution processes: (a) why was it decided that Telus should make a donation to the Carleton University School of Public Policy and Administration as opposed to paying Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs) to the government that would benefit all Canadians, and who made this decision; (b) what was the amount Telus agreed to pay the Carleton University School of Public Policy and Administration; (c) what would have been the maximum possible AMP for the violations alleged to have been committed by Telus; (d) what was the process that led to this decision; (e) why was the Carleton University School of Public Policy and Administration selected to be the recipient of this donation, as opposed to any other institution (e.g., Dalhousie University School of Public Administration); and (f) are any of the Commissioners, the Secretary General or any staff member of the CRTC currently an instructor, lecturer, part-time staff member or in any other way connected to the Carleton University School of Public Policy and Administration?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following is the response from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. With regard to Telus violations of the do not call list and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's, CRTC, alternative case resolutions processes, and in response to (a), Telus acted swiftly after being contacted by the CRTC and immediately volunteered to cease making the types of calls that were under investigation to its prepaid mobile customers. There was neither an admission of fault by Telus regarding its use of automated calling devices nor a formal finding of liability by the commission.

The chief telecommunications enforcement officer of the CRTC has been delegated the responsibility to perform negotiated settlements on behalf of the CRTC, and may consult with the vice-chair telecommunications where warranted.

In response to (b), Telus agreed to pay \$200,000 to the regulatory governance initiative at Carleton.

In response to (c), as set out in subsection 72.01(b) of the Telecommunications Act, "every contravention of a prohibition or requirement of the Commission under section 41 constitutes a violation, and the person who commits the violation is liable, in the case of a corporation, to an AMP of up to \$15,000."

Telus acted swiftly after being contacted by the CRTC and immediately volunteered to cease making the types of calls that were under investigation to its prepaid mobile customers. There was neither an admission of fault by Telus regarding its use of automated calling devices nor a formal finding of liability by the commission.

In response to (d), at any time during the course of an investigation, a telemarketer is welcome to discuss with the CRTC potential corrective actions that the telemarketer can take to bring itself into compliance with the rules. The outcome of these discussions could be a signed agreement with specific undertakings to implement immediate ongoing corrective measures and may include the payment of an AMP. The CRTC may enter into an agreement that would include a payment in lieu of a notice of violation setting out AMPs. This payment may be made to the crown or may take the form of a donation, as is the case across governments. A negotiated settlement avoids the cost and the time of an investigation while achieving the primary goal of compliance with the rules.

It is important to distinguish between the types of settlements in which the commission has the discretion to engage. In some instances, especially the most egregious cases, a notice of violation, which equates to an admittance of guilt, is required. In others, where circumstances warrant, a settlement with a payment is sufficient.

In response to (e), as is the case in all negotiations, Telus was provided with the terms for settlement and negotiations ensued. The regulatory governance initiative at Carleton was selected and mutually agreed upon as part of the discussions. The money is intended to support graduate studies in the areas of policy and regulations as they relate to the mandate of the CRTC and the responsiveness of regulatory programs to consumer and business needs.

In response to (f), while one of the almost 500 staff members teaches a course at Carleton, this was not known at the time of the negotiations. This individual has no connection to the regulatory governance initiative and was not in any manner involved in the investigation or the discussions with Telus. Further, the commission has entered into two more negotiated settlements, with Bell and Rogers, where payments were made to Concordia University, the British Columbia Institute of Technology and Université de Montréal. All funds are directed to initiatives that relate to telecommunications or Internet studies that support regulatory policy development. In addition, these initiatives will assist in improvements in the CRTC's ability to be responsive to the needs of businesses and consumers.

Question No. 24—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With respect to the National Do Not Call List, as of May 31, 2011: (a) what is the total number and dollar value of Administrative Monetary Penalties that have been imposed to date by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission; (b) what is the total number and dollar value of AMPs that have been paid to date; (c) what is the total number and dollar value of negotiated settlements that have been reached to date; (d) what is the total number and dollar value of negotiated settlements that have been paid to date; and (e) what is the number of companies who have refused to either pay an AMP or reach a negotiated settlement?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the national do not call list, as of May 31, 2011, in response to (a), as of May 31, 2011, the commission has issued 31 AMPs for a total of \$2,005,000.

In response to (b), the commission has received three complete payments and five partial payments for a total value of \$1,823,871.80.

In response to (c), there have been four negotiated settlements reached for a total value of \$2,541,000.

In response to (d), the four negotiated settlements have been paid in full.

In response to (e), no company has refused to either pay an AMP or reach a negotiated settlement.

Question No. 28—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to each meeting of the Treasury Board since April 1, 2009: (a) what was the date of the meeting; (b) where did the meeting occur; (c) who was in attendance; and (d) what was the agenda of the meeting?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this information is protected as a cabinet confidence according to section 69 of the Access to Information Act.

Question No. 32—Mr. Claude Gravelle:

With regard to the death of two workers at Vale's Stobie Mine in Sudbury: (a) what actions has the government undertaken to investigate the deaths; (b) which department led the investigation of the accident in the mine; (c) what are the preliminary results of that investigation; (d) what corrective measures have been recommended to prevent the recurrence of such an accident; (e) what sanctions, if any, does the federal government intend to impose against Vale; and (f) when was the last federal safety inspection conducted at the Vale mine in Sudbury and what were the conclusions of this inspection?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Government extends its condolences to the families, co-workers and friends of the two miners who lost their lives. Our government's top priority remains ensuring the health and safety of workers and the public.

Natural Resources Canada offered to provide any assistance required to the community and authorities in charge. However, the health and safety of mining activity falls exclusively within the jurisdiction of provinces and we will continue to provide any assistance required.

As this matter is now subject to an investigation, we are unable to comment further at this time.

Question No. 38—Hon. Ralph Goodale:

With regard to the ongoing disputes between the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) and one of its former employees, Dr. Chander Grover, between January 1, 2004, and October 31, 2010: (a) how much money has the NRC spent on legal services and costs for services provided by external legal counsel; (b) how much money has the NRC spent on legal services and costs for services provided by the Department of Justice; (c) how much money has the NRC spent on external communications advice; and (d) how much has the NRC spent on external consultants?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the ongoing disputes between the National Research Council Canada, NRC, and one of its former employees, Dr. Chander Grover, between January 1, 2004, and October 31, 2010, NRC claims solicitor-client privilege regarding the amount of legal fees, and waives the privilege in a limited way only to the extent of divulging the amount while retaining the right to claim privilege over bills of account that contain detailed information.

In response to (a), NRC has spent a total of \$890,478.92 on legal services and costs for services provided by external legal counsel. These expenditures represent costs that were incurred for legal services provided, as required, over a period of six years and nine months and were necessary because of the nature of the requirements, which could not be met by the Department of Justice legal staff.

In response to (b), NRC has spent a total of \$40,071.01 on legal services and costs for services provided by the Department of Justice.

In response to (c), no expenses were incurred for external communications advice.

In response to (d), NRC has spent a total of \$65,619.45 on external consultants in order to augment its internal capacity.

Question No. 44—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to the planned reduction in human resources for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada listed in the 2011-2012 Report on Plans and Priorities: (a) what is the estimated number of employees who will be affected; (b) how many reductions are estimated to be dealt with through attrition; (c) which positions are being eliminated as a part of this reduction, distributed by employee status, title, and program activity; and (d) what is the planned human resources commitment to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy for fiscal years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) and (c), the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada,

AANDC, 2011-12 report on plans and priorities, RPP, identifies a declining trend of full-time equivalent positions (FTEs), estimated potentially up to 770, over a three-year planning period from 2011-2012 to 2013-2014. These potential reductions are projected to reflect a number of programs that are sunsetting or coming to an end as part of the natural program lifecycle. These estimates do not presume or attempt to project future decisions, such as the extension of a sunsetting program, but merely reflect the current status in a program's life cycle. As such, it is not possible at this time to identify specific positions, program activities or employee status in relation to these potential reductions.

In response to (b), according to the Treasury Board Secretariat, attrition, often referred to as "natural attrition," refers to separations, exits or departures, of employees from the public service other than departures under existing incentive programs or due to devolution and privatization.

Based on trends observed over the past three years, the projected rate of attrition within the department as a whole would be 10.21%. Note that this does not relate to reductions in the RPP as per the answer to (a) and (c), but rather to the normal attrition rate across the entire department.

In response to (d), the five year authority to implement the urban aboriginal strategy expires March 31, 2012. The department is currently working towards renewal of the strategy and until a decision is made by cabinet whether to extend this initiative, we are unable to comment on the human resource commitment for fiscal years 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Question No. 46—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to the maternal and child health of Aboriginal people in Canada: (a) does the government collect data on the rates of maternal and infant mortality, disaggregated by Aboriginal population and, if so, (i) what is the most recent data, (ii) which departments and agencies are responsible for the collection of this data, (iii) what programs do they provide, (iv) what is the annual expenditure per program; (b) what efforts are being made to improve the collection of disaggregated data regarding the maternal and child health of Aboriginals; (c) what community-specific programs exist to improve the maternal and child health of (i) Status Indians on-reserve, (ii) Status Indians off-reserve, (iii) non-Status Indians, (iv) Inuit, (v) Métis, (vi) urban Aboriginals; (d) what is the percentage of pregnant Aboriginal women who receive maternal care (i) within their own community, (ii) outside of their own communities; and (e) what culturally-specific programs are available to support women who give birth outside their community?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the collection of maternal and infant mortality data falls within provincial-territorial jurisdictional responsibilities of health care.

Maternal mortality rates among aboriginal populations at the national level are not available due to the lack of ethnic identifiers in provincial-territorial vital statistics databases.

Information on maternal and infant mortality rates is maintained within the provincial-territorial vital statistics databases; the federal government liaises with the provinces and territories to roll up this information to the national level. The federal government funds within existing reference levels.

In response to (b), the federal government continues to work with its aboriginal and provincial-territorial partners at the regional level to improve access to aboriginal health data on a jurisdiction by jurisdiction basis. Examples of this work include the participation in the joint working group on first nations, Indian, Inuit, and Métis infant mortality data, which recently produced a report on data gaps in infant mortality rates, <http://journal.cpha.ca/index.php/cjph/article/view/2370>.

Efforts have been made at the federal level to improve the collection and quality of infant mortality data nationally. The joint working group on first nations, Inuit and Métis infant mortality data was initially brought together under the umbrella of Public Health Agency of Canada's Canadian perinatal surveillance system, and supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, and Health Canada, to advise on data development related to aboriginal perinatal health. The joint working group, composed of representatives from PHAC, Health Canada, Statistics Canada, and some national aboriginal organizations, focused on developing an aboriginal identification question that could be included in P/T vital statistics records to facilitate the collection and capture of aboriginal data across Canada. Implementing the collection of identifiers will require co-operation within and across jurisdictions, including aboriginal communities. PHAC and Health Canada continue exploring ways to facilitate this fundamental step to allow provision of information on national maternal and child health data specific to aboriginal populations.

In response to (c), information about Health Canada supported, community-specific programs that exist to improve maternal and child health of status-Indians on reserve, including the maternal and child health program, the Canada prenatal nutrition program, and the aboriginal head start on reserve program, can be found on Health Canada's website within the first nations and Inuit health community program's compendium, http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniiah-spnia/pubs/aborig-autoch/2007_compendium/index-eng.php.

The Public Health Agency of Canada supports community-specific programs to improve maternal and child health of status Indians off reserve, non-status Indians, Inuit, Métis, and urban aboriginals through programs like the aboriginal head start urban and northern communities, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/prog-ini/ahsunc-papacun/index-eng.php>; the community action program for children; <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/prog-ini/capc-pace/index-eng.php>; and the Canada prenatal nutrition program, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/prog-ini/cpnp/index-eng.php>.

In response to (d), we have information on the program reach of maternal and child health programs funded by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada. The maternal child health program provides home visiting by nurses and family visitors to 2,221 women and families with young children in 225 first nations communities.

The first nations and Inuit component of the Canada prenatal nutrition program, CPNP, currently reaches over 9,000 first nations and Inuit women per year at approximately 450 project sites, which serve more than 600 communities. The fetal alcohol spectrum disorder program funds approximately 36 mentoring sites across

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Canada, reaching more than 6000 women. In addition, there are 17 community coordinator positions to help increase families' access to multi-disciplinary FASD diagnostic teams and related services and support. The aboriginal head start on reserve, AHSOR, program serves over 9,000 children in over 300 first nations on-reserve communities across Canada.

As indicated in PHAC's "Maternity Experiences Survey", 2006-2007, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/rhs-ssg/survey-eng.php>, the provinces and territories are responsible for health care delivery for all Canadians and are therefore critical partners in maternal and child health.

In response to (e), Health Canada supports a number of initiatives directed at returning safe birthing options closer to home and to increase accessibility to midwifery for first nations and Inuit families. CPNP funds community-based groups and coalitions to provide access to culturally specific programs and services for pregnant women most at risk, including aboriginal women. CPNP aims to improve the health of pregnant women and their infants, reduce the number of babies born with unhealthy birth weights, and promote and support breastfeeding. A summative evaluation of CPNP, http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/about_apropos/evaluation/reports-rapports/2009-2010/cpnp-pcnp/index-eng.php, found that CPNP projects are serving approximately 50,000 women annually in over 3,000 communities across Canada, with 22% of CPNP new entrants identified as aboriginal in 2008-09. They included 3,670 women. The highest proportion of aboriginal participants was found in Saskatchewan, 79%; the territories, 66%; and Manitoba, 52%. Many CPNP projects serve rural, remote and/or isolated areas where there is reduced access to health services, and strive to link vulnerable children and their families in these areas to additional community supports.

Question No. 51—Mr. Scott Andrews:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and, more specifically, the decision to close the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre located in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador: (a) what are the estimated number of jobs being displaced and what costs are associated with the closure, including (i) wages or salaries, (ii) operational costs; (b) what additional resources will be added to the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres in Halifax, Trenton or other locations throughout Canada to compensate for the closure; (c) when and how was the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador first notified of this possible closure; (d) what consultations were held with any stakeholder groups and individuals concerning the possible closure and when did they take place; and (e) what groups and organizations have submitted their objections concerning the closure to the Minister and any of his officials in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the St. John's marine rescue sub-centre, MRSC, will be consolidated into the joint rescue coordination centre, JRCC, in Halifax.

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In response to (a), 12 positions at MRSC St. John's will be affected by this consolidation (I, ii). The cost associated with this consolidation cannot be determined until the implementation plan is rolled out, along with measures to deal with affected staff. It is expected that there will be training, accommodation and refit costs.

In response to (b), to enhance operations at JRCC Halifax following the consolidation, six new full-time search and rescue mission coordinator positions will be created.

In response to (c), the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans made a public statement to the press advising of the MRSC/JRCC consolidations on June 7, 2011. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador was not advised of the closures through a process separate from this public statement.

In response to (d), this consolidation is part of the Government of Canada's strategic review exercise, which requires that federal departments make reductions of 5% to their operating budgets by finding efficiencies. The strategic review was an internal exercise. To respect cabinet confidentiality, public consultations were not conducted.

In response to (e), the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has received emails, letters and petitions regarding this consolidation from various organizations, levels of government, and private citizens, including the Union of Canadian Transportation Employees, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the St. John's Board of Trade, the St. John's East NDP Riding Association, and the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Question No. 54—Mr. Scott Andrews:

With regard to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and, more specifically, the terms of an agreement with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to transfer the delivery of Employment Insurance-funded employment benefits and support measures through the Labour Market Development Agreement effective November 2, 2009, what are the specific terms and conditions of this agreement?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement, LMDA, was implemented on November 2, 2009. The LMDA falls within the scope of part II of the Employment Insurance Act and involves programs/services that are similar to those established by the Employment Insurance Commission. It is open-ended in duration and provides the province with customized allocations based on precise funding formula calculations.

Details on the LMDA are available through the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website at <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/employment/partnerships/pdlmdanfld.shtml>.

Question No. 56—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With respect to trade agreements: (a) what is the number of negotiators, if any, that have been retained from outside the government to represent Canada in current trade negotiations; and (b) has the government considered or implemented plans to undertake a review of the Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement in 2014 to evaluate the trade implications for Canada?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), all trade negotiators representing the Canadian government are

Government of Canada employees; no outside negotiators have been retained.

In response to (b), our government continually assesses its trading relationships to ensure Canadian workers, farmers and businesses in all regions of Canada benefit.

The Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement is part of our government's free trade plan that is creating jobs and economic growth for Canadian workers and their families. The agreement with Peru is creating new opportunities with this key Latin American country.

Canadian workers, farmers and businesses are benefiting from eliminated and/or reduced tariffs on many exports. When the Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement came into force on August 1, 2009, many agricultural exports, such as wheat, barley, lentils and peas, received immediate duty-free status.

Question No. 57—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With respect to the June 2001 report entitled "Coastal Impacts of Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise on Prince Edward Island": (a) have there been any updates to the study since the release of the report in June 2001; (b) has the government conducted any separate studies since June 2001 on the impacts of climate change and rising sea-levels on Prince Edward Island; (c) what programs have been implemented to deal with rising sea levels affecting Prince Edward Island; and (d) what advice or assistance has been provided by the Government of Canada to the Government of Prince Edward Island to deal with the impact of rising sea levels on the province?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), scientists at Natural Resources Canada, NRCAN, have published various peer-reviewed, scientific papers based on the original data collected for the report entitled "Coastal Impacts of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise on Prince Edward Island" since its release in June 2001. These include the following:

Webster, T.L., Forbes, D.L., Dickie, S., and Shreenan, R. (2004). Using topographic LiDAR to map flood risk from storm-surge events for Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Remote Sensing*, 30 (1), 64-76. Forbes, D.L., Parkes, G. S., Manson, G.K., and Ketch, L.A. (2004). Storms and shoreline retreat in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. *Marine Geology*, 210, 169-204. O'Reilly, C.T., Forbes, D.L., and Parkes, G.S. (2005). Defining and adapting to coastal hazards in Atlantic Canada: facing the challenge of rising sea levels, storm surges and shoreline erosion in a changing climate. *Ocean Yearbook*, 19, 189-207. Webster, T.L. and Forbes, D.L. (2006). Airborne laser altimetry for predictive modelling of coastal storm-surge flooding. In: *Remote Sensing of Aquatic Coastal Ecosystem Processes: Science and Management Applications* (Richardson, L.L. and LeDrew, E.F., editors). Springer, Dordrecht, 157-182.

NRCAN has not updated the actual report entitled "Coastal Impacts of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise on Prince Edward Island" since its release in June 2001.

In response to (b), NRCAN has monitored closely the conditions in Prince Edward Island and has conducted field reconnaissance following some major storms. These activities provided the basis for public presentations in Prince Edward Island during 2009 and 2010.

In December of 2010, NRCan and university partners deployed two temporary wave and tide gauges offshore of Brackley Beach, Northern Prince Edward Island, to measure waves under sea ice in support of a doctoral research project. An attempt at recovery of these instruments was made in April 2011, but was unsuccessful. Another attempt is planned in the summer of 2011. These results could provide insight into near-shore sediment transport under conditions of reduced sea ice and changing storminess, important considerations under changing climate in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence.

In response to (c), in December 2007 the Government of Canada announced that funding would be provided for climate change adaptation. In 2009, NRCan implemented a \$30M Regional Adaptation Collaborative, RAC, program that brings together provincial and municipal governments as well as other important regional decision-makers. The goal of this national program is to advance climate change adaptation decision-making locally to deal with regionally specific challenges and thereby increase Canada's resilience to a changing climate. The Atlantic RAC was established as part of this program and is addressing a variety of climate change impacts, including sea level rise.

Through the Tools for Adaptation Program, NRCan is working in collaboration with the Canadian Institute of Planners, CIP, to ensure that scientific research and information on climate change impacts, including rising sea levels, will be considered in planning practice Canada-wide.

In response to (d), in March 2009 the Hon. Richard Brown, Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry for the Government of P.E.I., attended one of the NRCan public presentations referenced in part (b). Following the presentation, the minister commended NRCan for the value of the event, noted the importance of comprehensive information on the subject, and requested that NRCan be available to offer future advice. Since that time, NRCan has, when asked, offered incidental technical advice to the P.E.I. Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Question No. 58—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With respect to Canada's airports: (a) what is the total amount of federal funding, announced in March 2011, for the Jean Lesage Airport in Quebec City; (b) under what programs was the funding in (a) awarded; (c) what is the total amount of federal funding, announced in February 2011, for the Charlottetown Airport; and (d) under what programs was the funding in (c) awarded?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), on March 16, 2011, the Government of Canada announced it will invest up to \$50 million for the long-term expansion and modernization of the Jean-Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, a \$225 million initiative.

In response to (b), an amount of \$21.6 million, under the Gateways and Border Crossings Fund, was awarded at that time for three specific projects submitted by the airport authority. The work includes the extension and widening of two paved strips on airport grounds, the upgrading of underground utilities, and the construction of an additional taxiway to connect the Delta and Golf taxiways. Discussions are under way with the Jean-Lesage International

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Airport in order to identify eligible projects with respect to the remaining funds of \$28.4 million.

In response to (c), on February 21, 2011, the Government of Canada announced it will invest up to \$1.2 million to expand Charlottetown Airport's existing terminal, a \$3.5 million project.

In response to (d), the \$1.2 million was awarded under the Gateways and Border Crossings Fund.

Question No. 59—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:

With respect to the government's decision not to implement recommendation nine from the June 2009 report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled "Shared Experiences: Comparisons of Veterans Services Offered by Members of the Commonwealth and the G8": (a) what criteria were used to arrive at this decision; (b) what was the policy rationale for the decision; and (c) is the government considering any other information sharing arrangements to better identify veterans and their families in order to ensure that they receive the benefits available to them?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, recommendation 9 from the June 2009 report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled "Shared Experiences: Comparisons of Veterans Services Offered by Members of the Commonwealth and the G8", reads: "That the Department of Veterans Affairs explore with Canada Revenue Agency the possibility of modifying income tax returns to allow veterans and their families to identify themselves so that they can receive information on the financial benefits and support services available to them." Veterans Affairs Canada implemented the recommendation by consulting with the Canada Revenue Agency. These consultations resulted in Canada Revenue Agency's confirmation that the focus of Canada Revenue Agency forms is on tax and benefit programs administered by the Canada Revenue Agency only. The criteria used in the decision not to pursue the inclusion of a veteran identifier on tax forms were privacy, legal authority, effectiveness, and sustainable development commitments.

Question No. 62—Mr. Andrew Cash:

With regard to the G20 Summit ex gratia payments: (a) to date, how many applications have been approved and paid to claimants; (b) how many applications have been approved but not yet paid to claimants; (c) of the approved applications awaiting payment, what is the reason for payment not being made; (d) how many applications have been rejected; (e) of the applications rejected, what was the reason for rejection; and (f) what are all applications for compensation, the amount of compensation requested, and, if approved, the amount of compensation that was approved?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the government is not legally bound to pay compensation for losses suffered as a result of international meetings held in Canada, commercial businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals can be and have been compensated for loss of net profits, loss of net revenues and/or extraordinary costs stemming from the implementation of extraordinary security measures during the course of these meetings. The assessment of the claims is an independent process and made in close cooperation with Audit Services Canada, a special operation agency reporting to Public Works and Government Services Canada.

The guidelines used for the G20 Toronto summit have been in place since 2001, and are the same as those applied successfully at previous summits, including the Summit of the Americas, 2001; the G8 in Kananaskis, 2002; and the Sommet de la Francophonie in Québec City, 2008.

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In response to (a), to date 196 G20 claims have been assessed as eligible under the guidelines for payments on an *ex gratia* basis. Of those claims, 149 claims have been paid.

In response to (b), 47 eligible claims have not yet been paid to claimants.

In response to (c), the Department of Foreign Affairs has processed all payments to eligible businesses that have signed the waiver they received. Of the claims that have not yet been paid, all that is outstanding are signed waivers. As soon as these are received, payments will be processed.

In response to (d), to date 166 G20 claims have been assessed as ineligible under the guidelines for payments on an *ex gratia* basis.

In response to (e), it is important to note that under section 8(g) of the guidelines, claimants have the onus to demonstrate that they qualify as eligible. The guidelines, frequently asked questions and claim form have been available on the DFAIT website, and a toll-free line was activated by the summits management office. Clauses 8 and 9 in the guidelines provide explanation for the ineligibility of claims. The website is <http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/g20/exgratia-guidelines-titregracieux.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>.

In response to (f), the total value of the 367 claims submitted for the G20 is \$11,093,518.20. The total value of the amounts assessed for payment by Audit Services Canada is \$1,932,052.

Question No. 66—Hon. Bob Rae:

With regard to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (DFAIT) recent announcement of an engagement strategy with Africa, as outlined in the department's Report on Plans and Priorities: (a) what briefing notes has DFAIT received or produced regarding its proposed engagement with Africa; (b) what scenarios has DFAIT prepared for a Canadian role in the African continent; (c) which African countries are included in the proposed engagement strategy; (d) what is the projected cost of this engagement strategy with Africa; and (e) what is the timeline of DFAIT's engagement strategy with Africa?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade regularly receives and produces briefing notes on a variety of topics related to Canada's international relations. Three briefings notes were prepared in relation to engagement in sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to (b), DFAIT continually reviews policy options in all aspects of Canada's international relations, and its work in all regions. The Report on Plans and Priorities represents ongoing work in the Department, and while the 2011-2012 document notes that an "engagement strategy with Africa will be developed", it is not in itself an announcement of a new strategy.

In response to (c), DFAIT continues to work with all countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

In response to (d), any engagement strategy will be realized within existing resources.

In response to (e), over the past two years, the department has continued to review its work in sub-Saharan Africa in light of the continent's economic and political transformation, characterized by improvements in governance and democracy and economic growth.

Question No. 68—Mr. Sean Casey:

With respect to the lump sum disability awards under the New Veterans Charter: (a) how many eligible recipients received the maximum amount; (b) what is the percentage of eligible recipients who received less than \$50,000; (c) what is the percentage of eligible recipients who received between \$50,000 and \$99,000; (d) what is the percentage of eligible recipients who received between \$100,000 and \$149,999; (e) what is the percentage of eligible recipients who received between \$150,000 and \$199,999; and (f) what is the percentage of eligible recipients who received between \$200,000 and \$249,999?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), 245 recipients have received the maximum disability award amount.

In response to (b), 72% of eligible disability award recipients received less than \$50,000.

In response to (c), 19% of eligible disability award recipients received between \$50,000 and \$99,999.

In response to (d), 6% of eligible disability award recipients received between \$100,000 and \$149,999.

In response to (e), 2% of eligible disability award recipients received between \$150,000 and \$199,999.

In response to (f), fewer than 1% of eligible disability award recipients received between \$200,000 and \$249,999.

Question No. 71—Hon. Mauril Bélanger:

With regard to the corporate asset review announced in the 2008 Economic and Fiscal Statement: (a) how many assets have been reviewed; (b) which assets were reviewed; and (c) were assets sold and, if so, (i) how many, (ii) what were they, (iii) what were the purchase prices, (iv) who were the buyers?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) and (b), page 209 of budget 2009, found at www.budget.gc.ca/2009/pdf/budget-planbugetaire-eng.pdf, announced the launch of the corporate asset management review would begin with the portfolios of the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

In response to (c), no assets have been sold as part of the corporate asset management review to date. As stated in budget 2009, the government will take a considered approach to the sale of any asset, including taking into account the condition of markets, to ensure that fair value can be realized by taxpayers and the transaction will generate additional economic activity. Assets will not be sold if such sales do not meet these tests.

Question No. 73—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to the Department of Natural Resources, are there any unlicensed low level radioactive waste storage sites in Canada and, if so, where are they located?

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Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Natural Resources Canada, NRCAN, the low-level radioactive waste management office, LLRWMO, manages six unlicensed low-level radioactive waste interim storage sites: the Passmore Avenue mound in Scarborough, Ontario; three small unlicensed consolidation sites in Port Hope, Ontario; the Beacon Hill landfill mound in Fort McMurray, Ontario; and the Fort Smith landfill cell in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories.

These storage sites contain historic low-level radioactive waste for which NRCAN has accepted responsibility. These are not licensed due to the fact that the activity concentration is below the unconditional clearance level as per Schedule II of the Nuclear Substance and Radiation Devices Regulations of the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission continues to oversee the management of these sites by the LLRWMO.

Question No. 76—**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:**

With respect to proficiency in the second official language: (a) what is the language proficiency level of each of the chief executives of federal institutions; and (b) when did each chief executive obtain this level?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office responds that the second official language proficiencies of deputy ministers, chief executive officers of crown corporations and heads of agencies are not monitored, as there is no statutory requirement to establish a proficiency level for these individuals who are appointed at the discretion of the governor in council.

However, all governor in council appointees have an obligation to support and promote the objectives of the Official Languages Act by personally promoting the use of both official languages in their institutions. This is a term and condition of employment. Additionally, deputy ministers or others appointed by the governor in council from the executive group, EX, of the public service were required to meet a linguistic profile of CBC/CBC according to the Treasury Board policy concerning the language requirements for members of the executive group, established in 2003.

The language proficiency of an individual constitutes personal information, and is protected in accordance with the principles of the Access to Information Act.

Question No. 77—**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to the operating budget freeze at the Privy Council Office: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the period of April 1, 2010 to July 4, 2011, the Privy Council Office, PCO, responds with regard to (a) that normal attrition provided the Privy Council Office with the flexibility to manage budget reduction during the last fiscal year.

In response to (b), 430 full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition.

In response to (c), no full-time or part-time employees were laid-off.

In response to (d), 487 full-time and part-time employees were hired.

In response to (e), the indeterminate departure rate for 2010-11 was 16.3%, which is consistent with the previous year's indeterminate departure rate of 16.5%. The Privy Council Office does not formulate projected attrition rates.

Question No. 80—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to Health Canada's wait times strategy: (a) what are the most recent wait times as reported by each province in each of the five key areas of the government's wait times strategy (cancer, heart, diagnostic imaging, joint replacement and sight restoration); and (b) what was the amount of money earmarked for wait time reduction disbursed by the government to each province in each year of the government's wait times strategy?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, CIHI, has been reporting on progress on wait times across jurisdictions. Its most recent edition of the "Wait Times Tables—A Comparison by Provinces, 2011", released on March 21, 2011, provides a summary of provincial wait times data, primarily comprised of retrospective administrative data, in the five priority areas as of September 2010. This report provides the most comparable available information on wait times for a common point in time for all provinces. The report is available on the CIHI website, <https://secure.cihi.ca/estore/productFamily.htm?locale=en&pf=PFC1599>.

In terms of funding transferred to provincial and territorial governments, the federal government provided \$5.5 billion in wait times commitments. This included a wait times reduction trust totalling \$4.25 billion for the period of 2004-05 through 2008-09, followed by a \$250 million annual wait times reduction transfer, from 2009-10 through 2013-14. To provide the public with greater certainty on timely access, budget 2007 announced additional funding of more than \$1 billion over three years to support the development of patient wait times guarantees, including a \$612 million trust; a \$400 million enhancement to Canada health infoway funding; and a \$30 million patient wait times guarantee pilot project fund. These targeted investments were intended to help the provinces and territories test and implement patient wait times guarantees. Further information on the allocation of federal funding for wait times by jurisdiction is available through the Department of Finance's website, http://www.fin.gc.ca/fedprov/typhc_eng.asp and <http://www.fin.gc.ca/fedprov/mtp-eng.asp>.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 85—Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to the Department of Natural Resources, for every year since 2006, how many people have been employed by the Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Port Hope area initiative management office has employed the following number of staff for each year since it was created in 2008-09: 2008/2009 – 5; 2009/2010 – 22; 2010/2011 – 36.

Question No. 86—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at Public Safety Canada: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the 2010 budget operating freeze called for general containment of expenditures through key restricting measures.

One of the key measures impacting Public Safety Canada, PS, is the one calling for increases in wages and salaries resulting from collective agreements negotiated in the period from the 2010-11 to 2012-13 fiscal years, to be funded within the PS' existing appropriations. As such, no additional funding was provided in 2010-11 to fund the 1.5 per cent increase in annual wages for the federal public administration, and PS is required to reallocate from its existing operating budget to fund these increases. Based on PS' existing workforce for 2010-11, this measure translates into an increase in our salary expenditures of \$845,000, including 17 per cent employee benefits plans, which PS is required to absorb. PS will also be required to fund the cost of economic increases resulting from collective agreements negotiated in 2011-12 and 2012-13 through reallocations from its existing reference levels.

PS has put in place rigorous financial planning and reporting practices that better support timely and informed decisions on the allocation of resources to ensure the efficient and effective management of objectives and priorities. This process has enabled PS to closely monitor the financial situation in 2010-11 and to exercise informed decisions in the reallocation of any departmental flexibility to support operating requirements. This has in turn provided the necessary latitude to realign resources to meet priorities and manage the added cost of negotiated economic increases within PS' operating budget.

Through its integrated business and human resources plan, PS has been successful in articulating a strategic approach in support of an effective deployment of its resources to support the achievement of priorities and key initiatives. This tool will prove instrumental in guiding the department through its management of expenditure containment measures over the next two fiscal years.

PS has also successfully managed to maintain its use of overtime over the past three years and is currently in the process of evaluating additional control measures to better support the impact of future years' unfunded wage increases.

In budget 2009, the government announced that spending on travel, hospitality and conferences would be capped at 2008-09 levels for 2009-10 and 2010-11. Budget 2010 reaffirmed the commitment to maintain the cap on spending at the 2008-09 levels of departmental spending in these areas. Through prudent management, PS has successfully reduced its spending on travel, hospitality and conferences over the last two fiscal years. This has resulted in savings of more than \$1 million in 2009-10 and further savings of approximately \$210,000 in 2010-11.

The Government of Canada introduced a new expenditure management system in 2007 as part of an on-going commitment to better manage government spending. A key pillar of this system is the ongoing assessment of all direct program spending, or strategic reviews. Budget 2010 held this commitment with the intent to maximize savings in future strategic reviews. PS' contribution in respect of the 2009 round of strategic reviews resulted in total savings of \$7.3 million to its 2010-11 reference levels; \$1.1 million of which is in operating expenditures. In this respect, PS will achieve more sizeable savings in 2011-12 of \$13.4 million to its reference levels, \$3.1 million of which are in operating expenditures.

In response to (b), PS' departure rate for 2010-11 was 14.1 per cent, an improvement from last fiscal year's 16.6 per cent. For the 2010-11 fiscal year, figures compiled on the nature of terminations show that of the 157 terminations that occurred during this period, 119 employees or over 75 per cent of the departures are attributed to employees that have transferred out of PS to other federal government organisations, with the remaining portion mostly being distributed between retirements, 17 employees or over 10 per cent; and end of specified period, 8 term employees or 5 per cent.

In response to (c), no full-time or part-time employees were laid off in 2010-11 as a result of the impacts of the 2010 operating budget freeze measures.

In response to (d), during 2010-11, 117 full-time employees and three part-time employees were hired.

In response to (e), the projected departures rates for the next five years can only be estimated based on past trends of departures. On the basis of the calculated yearly average rate of departures over the three fiscal years, including PS' estimated rate for this year, the average departure rate for PS is estimated to be around 15 per cent over the next five fiscal years. Based on the same methodology of calculation, 81 per cent of the departure rate is forecasted to be attributable to employees transferring out of PS, while 11 per cent will likely be linked to retirements. The future years' impact of the 2010 budget operating freeze has not been factored in this extrapolation and could impact the future years' forecasted departure rate.

Question No. 87—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at the Canadian International Development Agency: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), budget 2010 announced a number of cost containment measures to reduce the rate of growth in operating expenditures in 2010-11 and the following two years. In 2010-11, CIDA had to absorb the wage and salary increase resulting from signed collective agreements, \$1,769K. For the next two years, the agency's operating budget is frozen at the 2010-11 levels. As part of Canada's new agenda for aid effectiveness, CIDA has already committed to focus its programming to improve efficiencies in program delivery and operations, while maintaining high level of stewardship and due diligence. In order to improve efficiencies, program business processes are being redesigned to be more streamlined and to enable more effective program delivery. The implementation of CIDA's integrated business planning provides a foundation for more effectiveness and efficient use of resources going forward.

In response to (b), during fiscal year 2010-11, 169 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees have left CIDA. The departures include the number of deaths, resignations, retirements and transfers out.

In response to (c), in fiscal year 2010-11, zero full-time or part-time employees were laid off.

In response to (d), in fiscal year 2010-11, 126 full-time and 2 part-time indeterminate employees were hired.

In response to (e), as of March 31, 2011, 172 employees were eligible to retire. By the end of 2016, 280 additional indeterminate employees will be eligible to retire. Overall, 452 indeterminate employees, excluding secondments and students, will be eligible to retire by 2016.

Question No. 88—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), budget 2010 announced two significant actions to reduce growth in the operating expenditures.

First, federal organizations are expected to absorb all salary increases beginning in 2010-11 until the end of 2012-13.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, AANDC, is successfully absorbing salary increases negotiated in collective agreements and additional personnel costs. The absorption of costs is done through robust monitoring of staffing processes and minimal transfer of operating dollars to cover some salary costs.

Second, operating budgets will be frozen at 2010-11 levels for the following two fiscal years, 2011-20 and 2012-13. It should be noted the freeze applies to operating budgets only. Operating budgets include departmental personnel costs, such as wages and salaries, as well as a range of other operating costs, including professional services contracts, transportation, communications, leases, utilities, materials and supplies.

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Certain adjustments have been made to operating budgets to allow for increases, for example, i, economic action plan spending; ii, the budget 2010 measures not included in the main estimates 2010-11; iii, any new policy initiatives approved by cabinet; iv, non-discretionary labour costs, such as parental benefits or severance pay.

The 2010-11 Main estimates did increase for the department due primarily to points i, ii and iii above.

AANDC is vigilant in managing its operating budget. Senior management continues to review and monitor spending levels on a monthly basis. The department continues to operate within its travel, hospitality and conferences cap announced in budget 2009 and encourages the use of tele and video conferencing to generate savings in travel. AANDC continues to see a downward trend in public servant travel, hospitality and conferences. Reducing certain types of expenditures is allowing the increased salary costs to be covered.

When required to do so, senior management continues to manage adjustments in operations and reallocates resources where needed.

For 2011-12 and 2012-13, AANDC will continue providing programs and services as planned while prudently and efficiently managing within its available resources.

In response to (b), during fiscal year 2010-11, April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, a total of 436 employees were lost to attrition. This includes 427 full-time and 9 part-time employees.

In response to (c), during fiscal year 2010-11, April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, a total of 16 full-time employees were laid off.

In response to (d), during fiscal year 2010-11, April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, a total of 442 employees were hired. This includes 438 full-time and 4 part-time employees.

In response to (e), the department does not have a system in place to project attrition rates. However the average attrition rate over the last three fiscal years is 10.21% (12.55% in FY 2008-09, 9.36% FY 2009-10, 8.72% FY 2010-11). Therefore, we can expect that the attrition rate will continue to trend downwards, but not significantly. AANDC estimates that over the next five years, 991 employees will come eligible for retirement. Among workers hired under the Public Service Employment Act, approximately 56% do retire within one year of becoming eligible or choose to retire before eligibility.

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Attrition rates include departure rates of indeterminate employees, for example, retirement, transfers out, termination, resignation, discharge, death, lay off.

Question No. 89—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the operating budget freeze at Industry Canada: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Industry Canada is committed to making appropriate spending choices in order to remain within the departmental budget voted by Parliament.

To achieve this objective, current and planned spending was monitored closely. Forecasts were completed and approved by senior management on a monthly basis and staffing plans were rigorously reviewed to ensure affordability and sustainability. Major project spending decisions are approved through an internal governance process.

These measures will continue in future years in order to maintain operations within parliamentary appropriations provided to Industry Canada.

In response to (b), in fiscal year 2010–11, 476 full-time and 12 part-time permanent employees left the department.

In response to (c), no full-time or part-time employees were laid off as a result of budget 2010 cost containment measures.

In response to (d), in fiscal year 2010–11, 374 full-time and 4 part-time employees were hired.

In response to (e), as Industry Canada's attrition rate varies based on multiple factors that are determined on an annual basis, the department does not prepare a five year projection.

Question No. 90—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the operating budget freeze at Natural Resources Canada: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), (b), and (c), Natural Resources Canada, NRCan, is fully compliant with the operational budget freeze announced in budget 2010. The measures in the operational budget freeze require NRCan to absorb the collective bargaining increases related to 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. In addition, as per budget 2009, NRCan is subject to the cap for travel, hospitality and conference fees based upon 2009-10 expenditures. In 2010-11, NRCan spent 19% less on travel, hospitality and conference fees compared to 2009-10 expenditures. From April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, a total of 361 NRCan employee departures resulted from attrition. These fiscal restraint measures are being managed without any impact on NRCan employees.

In response to (d), the number of full-time and part-time indeterminate employees hired at NRCan from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011, is as follows: full-time indeterminate employees hired, 299; part-time indeterminate employees hired, 5.

In response to (e), the total of indeterminate employees eligible for retirement over the next five years is 1,233.

Question No. 92—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the Department of Natural Resources and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, for every year since 2006, how many full-time staff have been employed by the Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Office?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the low-level radioactive waste management office, LLRWMO, employed the following number of full-time staff for each year since 2006: in 2006-2007, 30; in 2007-2008, 27; in 2008-2009, 26; in 2009-2010, 12; in 2010-2011, 11.

In 2009-2010, the responsibility to deliver the Port Hope area initiative was formally transferred from the LLRWMO to the Port Hope area initiative management office, which resulted in employee transfers, as evident in the decrease in the last two years.

Question No. 93—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to Service Canada's job cuts in rural areas: (a) is Service Canada planning to reverse its decision to eliminate jobs in the riding of Cardigan; (b) what are Service Canada's reasons for cutting jobs in rural areas and moving them to larger centers; (c) how many jobs will be cut permanently, both in the Cardigan riding and nation-wide; and (d) what are the projected overall long-term effects on rural populations with regard to access to government services?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Service Canada is committed to serving Canadians efficiently and effectively in these challenging economic times. Like any well-managed organization, Service Canada must ensure its workforce is based on changing operational requirements over the course of the year.

In response to (b), Service Canada strives to make it easier for Canadians to get the information and services they need from government, when and as they want it. Increasingly, this means that government needs to provide 24-hour online easy-to-use self-service. Canadians also want efficient government that provides them with good value for their hard-earned tax dollars.

Service Canada's employment insurance service delivery model has a new vision—one workload, one process, one workforce—supported by a national workload strategy. Essentially, this means work can be moved quickly and effectively to the next available agent in one of our processing sites across Canada, as opposed to local availability.

Over the next three years, Service Canada will continue to modernize the delivery of employment insurance by expanding the automation of EI claims. By leveraging technology, Service Canada will have the capacity needed to address fluctuating workloads and improve efficiencies, all while creating a greater capacity to meet clients' demand for online self-service.

In response to (c), as a result of efficiencies arising from modernization and consolidation, there will be an impact on the number of staff needed and where they are located. Human resource reductions as a result of this phase of modernization will be managed with the help of attrition, reassignment and training.

There are approximately 600 positions that will be affected nationally by these changes over the next three years. Our goal is to ensure employment continuity of indeterminate staff. A workforce management strategy has been developed to help manage staffing through attrition, reassignment and training.

Vacancy management committees have been set up in every region and branch with the goal of ensuring that all internal affected employees are considered for other available positions. Throughout the process, we are committed to ongoing communication with unions about consolidation and will be using the established consultation committees as a means of ensuring dialogue.

In response to (d), the government has committed to delivering service to Canadians in a way that is modern, efficient and focused. These modernization efforts will provide Canadians, including those in rural communities, with greater access to an increased range of information and services. These changes will result in efficient service for Canadians, including serving 95% of citizens within 50 km of where they live; choice of channels for delivery, including servicecanada.gc.ca, 1 800 O-Canada, in-person SC centre, or outreach location; and focus on first-point-of-contact resolution and proactive service offers tailored to client needs, called "bundling".

The end goal is consistent with our mission to provide secure, knowledgeable, seamless and personalized service to Canadians.

Question No. 97—Hon. Wayne Easter :

With regard to the government's response to Q-795 (40th Parliament, Third Session), particularly the Minister of Natural Resources' statement in the answer to part (c) that no construction has begun on the Port Hope Area Initiative, why have 19 claims for over \$800,000 been paid out for this initiative?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as of December 2010, the 19 claims listed in the government's response to Q-795 had been paid out under the property value protection, PVP, program. The PVP program compensates property owners in the municipalities for those losses related primarily to a diminution in property value, in accordance with the authorities granted for the Port Hope area initiative by the Treasury Board of Canada. Each of the 19 claims was submitted in

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accordance with the PVP guidelines and assessed individually based on merit.

Despite the fact that the implementation phase of the initiative has not yet begun, some property owners have realized losses on the value of their properties. In most cases, these losses are attributed to the proximity of the properties to the proposed waste management facilities and the uncertainty of buyers about the potential effects of the proposed facility on the property that is being sold. Thus, the prospect of the development of a radioactive waste management facility in the vicinity of these properties has led to a diminution in property value.

Question No. 99—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to the firearms training program for Canada Border Services Agency officers: (a) how many training facilities are there; (b) where are these facilities located; (c) is accommodation for trainees and trainers located on site or provided through commercial sources; and (d) what is the duration of the program for the trainees?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), there are currently three dedicated training facilities for the CBSA duty firearm course, as well as modular firing ranges in Ottawa, Ontario, and Chilliwack, British Columbia, and 72 private and public ranges across Canada that the CBSA can lease for arming practice and recertification activities.

In response to (b), the training facilities are located in Chilliwack, British Columbia; Ottawa, Ontario; and Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

In response to (c), the training facilities in Chilliwack and Summerside have accommodations on site. The training facility in Ottawa does not have accommodations on site, so employees stay at a local hotel in close proximity to the training facilities. Trainers who are engaged locally do not require accommodations.

In response to (d), the duration of the duty firearm course for employees is 15 days.

Question No. 101—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to the Air Travellers Security Charge in 2010: (a) how much money was collected and where was this money spent, in both real and accrual sums; and (b) does the government have any information concerning how this fee compares to airport security charges in other countries and, if so, what are the details of this information?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the air travellers security charge, ATSC, came into effect in 2002 to help fund the air travel security system, including the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, CATSA, the federal authority responsible for the security screening of air passengers and their baggage.

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In addition to CATSA, the air travel security system includes Transport Canada regulations and oversight and Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers on selected domestic and international flights. In response to (a), as stated in the 2010 Public Accounts of Canada, the ATSC accounted for approximately \$375 million in accrual figures in 2009-2010. For more information, please visit www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/txt/72-eng.html. As per the financial statements in its 2010 annual report, CATSA had operating expenditures of approximately \$577 million in accrual figures in 2009-2010. For more information, please visit www.catsa.gc.ca/File/Library/87/English/AnnualReport2010.pdf. Figures are available on an accrual basis.

In response to (b), numerous countries levy charges on passenger tickets to recover the cost of screening, but it is difficult to make international comparisons. In Canada, the ATSC helps fund the enhanced air travel security system and is payable by air travellers who principally and directly benefit from that system. Other countries may use different approaches to fund their air travel security. The U.S., for instance, employs different sets of fees and taxes, including passenger security fees and air carrier fees, to help pay for aviation security enhancements.

Question No. 102—Hon. Gerry Byrne:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC): Mr. Speaker, insofar as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, is concerned, with regard to the operating budget freeze, in response to (a), the agency is continually monitoring ways to increase efficiencies. Initiatives are being undertaken to streamline internal operations while maintaining service to clients and appropriate stewardship of government resources. The agency anticipates no difficulties in achieving the savings required.

In response to (b), no full-time or part-time employees were lost to attrition; in response to (c), no full-time or part-time employees were laid off; in response to (d), 59 employees were hired, of which 43 were indeterminate and 16 were specified period appointments, all full-time; and in response to (e), as of June 21, 2011, 41 employees were eligible for retirement, 10 will be eligible between July and December 2011, 18 in 2012, 22 in 2013, 24 in 2014 and 19 in 2015.

In addition, over the past five years an average of 29 employees have left the agency each year for reasons other than retirement, and it is anticipated that this trend will continue to some extent over the next five years.

Question No. 103—Mr. Frank Valeriote:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, AAFC, closely monitored all operating expenses and reported on them monthly to the senior management of the department.

Budget 2010 announced two significant actions to reduce the rate of growth in operating expenditures. First, any salary and wage increases set in the Expenditure Restraint Act and in collective agreements for fiscal year 2010-11 until the end of fiscal year 2012-13 are to be absorbed by organizations. No moneys were provided to AAFC to fund the 1.5 % increase in annual wages for the federal public administration. AAFC is required to reallocate the resources from its operating budgets to fund these increases. Funding that was already provided in the department's reference levels for these increases was returned to Treasury Board Secretariat through supplementary estimates.

The department has a staffing realignment board that reviews and approves all external staffing requests to ensure that people are matched to priorities within available financial resources. Salaries are monitored monthly by each branch against established maximum salary budgets.

Second, operating budgets for fiscal year 2011-12 have been frozen at the 2010-11 levels. A subsequent freeze of operating budgets at those same levels is anticipated for fiscal year 2012-13.

To this end, additional measures were instituted that focused on travel, hospitality and conferences. Employees have been advised of best practices related to travel in an effort to reduce the associated costs, e.g., encouraging the use of video conferencing, using the online booking tool, booking travel well in advance to take advantage of reduced rate tickets.

In response to (b), 483 indeterminate employees, 462 full-time and 21 part-time, were lost to attrition at AAFC during the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

In response to (c), no employees were laid off at AAFC during the 2010-11 fiscal year.

In response to (d), 467 indeterminate employees (465 full-time and 2 part-time) were hired at AAFC during the 2010-11 fiscal year.

In response to (e), fiscal restraint and reduced hiring across the public service is expected to reduce the number of departures to other government departments. AAFC does not forecast attrition more than two years into the future because there are a number of unknown factors that make such forecasts unreliable.

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At present, the expected attrition rate is forecast to be 450 in 2011-12, 7.2% of total employees, in the current fiscal year; 430 in 2012-2013, 6.9% of total employees; and 445 in 2013-14, 7.1% of total employees.

Attrition is defined as the departure of employees due to retirements or resignations, transfers to other government departments and departures for other reasons.

Question No. 104—Mr. Frank Valeriote:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at NAV CANADA: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, NAV Canada is the private sector, non-share capital corporation that owns and operates Canada's civil air navigation service, ANS. Transport Canada has no responsibility with respect to business decisions that the company makes with respect to budget and/or staffing issues.

Question No. 106—Hon. Gerry Byrne:

With respect to the National Highway System (NHS), for core routes, feeder routes and remote northern routes: (a) what is the process for suggesting the addition of a new route to the Council of Ministers of Transportation and Highway Safety; and (b) how many provinces and territories must support the addition of a new route for it to be included in the NHS?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), any new route additions or other major changes to the NHS, including deletion from or movement within the three categories comprising core, feeder, and northern and remote routes, could be proposed by any jurisdiction including the federal government. In order to evaluate these proposals, jurisdictions are required to provide supporting information and the data as per established criteria and thresholds. The NHS task force then provides its recommendation to the council of ministers.

In addition, in 2007 ministers also agreed that a full review of the NHS be undertaken every five years to maintain its relevance due to changing economic, social and demographic conditions. Starting in 2009, the NHS review task force engaged in a thorough review of the NHS for 2010. However, the 2010 review has yet to be brought to closure as additional work is required prior to recommendations being tabled with the council of ministers.

In response to (b), all changes to the NHS must be unanimously approved by all members of the council of ministers responsible for transportation and highway safety.

Question No. 108—Hon. Denis Coderre:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at the Department of Finance: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), to ensure

maximum efficiency for taxpayers' dollars in the fiscal year 2010-11, as part of the government's commitment outlined on page 161 of budget 2010, found at www.budget.gc.ca/2010/pdf/budget-planbud-getaire-eng.pdf, salary costs were reduced due to the time it takes to re-staff positions after staff departure, and measures were also put in place to reduce goods and services costs in areas such as travel. For 2011-12 and 2012-13, the department will continue these measures and seek additional opportunities for efficiencies in departmental operations.

In response to (b), attrition is defined as the number of employee departures. For the period April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011, 255 employees left the department, 215 full-time employees and 40 part-time employees. These employees include indeterminates, terms, seconded in, part-time workers, casuals and students. The required salary savings resulted from the period the positions were vacant before being restaffed.

In response to (c), between April 1, 2010, and March 31, 2011, the Department of Finance did not lay off any full-time or part-time employees.

In response to (d), the department hired 225 employees between April 1, 2010, and March 31, 2011, including 185 full-time employees and 40 part-time employees. These employees include indeterminates, terms, seconded in, part-time workers, casuals and students. The 2011-12 main estimates reflected a reduction in the operating budget of the department due to a number of initiatives other than the budget 2010 commitments. The departure and hiring numbers were impacted by all of these items.

In response to (e), the percentage of indeterminate employees who have left the department in the last 5 years was 17.5%. These data are updated quarterly and are used for internal business planning.

Question No. 109—Hon. Denis Coderre:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at Environment Canada: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the operating budget freeze at Environment Canada, in response to (a), the key driver of the cost containment measures is the operating budget freeze that was articulated in the 2010 federal budget tabled in the House of Commons on March 4, 2010.

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Two significant actions were announced in the budget to reduce growth in operating expenditures: operating budgets will be capped at the 2010-11 levels for the two fiscal years, 2011-12 and 2012-13; any wage and salary increases set in the Expenditure Restraint Act and in collective agreements applying from the beginning of 2010-11 and until the end of 2012-13 are to be absorbed by organizations.

These measures apply to all federal organizations appropriated by Parliament including departments, agencies and crown corporations.

The following items are excluded from the freeze: economic action plan spending which ends in March 2011; budget 2010 measures not included in the main estimates 2010-11; new policy initiatives approved by cabinet; non-discretionary labour costs, such as parental benefits or severance pay.

There was no government-wide freeze on hiring.

Within this context, Environment Canada has taken the following measures to limit spending for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Impact of budget 2010 measures for 2010-11 fiscal year have been included in 2010-11 supplementary estimates (A or B). There are no budget 2010 measures in supplementary estimates (C); budget 2010 measures for 2011-12 have been included in the 2011-12 main estimates. Travel, conferences and hospitality are within 2008-09 levels as directed by budget 2009 and are monitored by monthly reports. Efficiencies in the procurement process have been implemented. Human resources allocation has been re-evaluated and optimized.

In response to (b), the transactional data available in Environment Canada's human resources management system, HRMS, does not provide information on whether any employees separated from the department as a result of the operating budget freeze. In the course of normal operations, however, during fiscal year 2010-11, 582 full-time employees and 1127 part-time employees left Environment Canada.

In response to (c), from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011, one full-time employee was laid off at Environment Canada. No part-time employees were laid off. The one layoff was a result of a lack of work due to the sudden ending of a research project, but it was not as a result of the operating budget freeze.

In response to (d), from April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2011, Environment Canada hired 432 full-time employees and 1,031 part-time employees in the course of normal operations.

In response to (e), in the next five years, it is estimated that Environment Canada will lose between 550 and 600 full-time employees each year to attrition for various separation reasons in the course of normal operations. No projections are available for the attrition of part-time employees due to the transitory nature of the types of work involved.

* * *

[English]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I

ask that the government's response to Starred Question No. 15 be printed in *Hansard* as if read.

[Text]

***Question No. 15—Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the Montreal Port Authority: (a) was the Prime Minister's Spokesperson, Dimitri Soudas, involved in any way in the appointment of the Montreal Port Authority's Chief Executive Officer; and (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, (i) what are the details of this involvement, (ii) did the Prime Minister consent to this involvement?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the Montreal Port Authority appoints their chief executive officer.

* * *

● (1525)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 55, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 91, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100, 105, 107, 110, 111 and Starred Question No. 21 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2—Mr. Bruce Hyer:

With regard to corporate taxation: (a) how many corporations in Canada paid no tax in each of the last ten years; and (b) for each corporation identified in (a), what were its revenues and its profits in each of the last ten years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3—Mr. Dennis Bevington:

With regard to the expenditures of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as identified in the 2011-12 Main Estimates: (a) what programs are funded under the lines (i) Northern Land, Resources and Environmental Management (page 191), (ii) Contribution for promoting the safe use, development, conservation and protection of the North's natural resources (page 194), (iii) Contributions for promoting the political, social and scientific development of Canada's three territories (page 195), (iv) Contributions for promoting regional development in Canada's three territories (page 197), (v) Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Community Development (page 196); and (b) for each program identified in (a), what are the names or identities of each individual recipient of funds from each program and what amount of funding was provided to each recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 4—Ms. Libby Davies:

With regard to the PROminent FUNctionaries of the Communist Party (PROFUNC), run by the government between 1950-1983: (a) when requested by an individual who believes his or her name may be on the PROFUNC list, will the government disclose whether or not that individual's name is on the list; (b) what was done with the names on the PROFUNC list once PROFUNC was discontinued; (c) were any of the names or was any of the information about individuals named on the PROFUNC list ever turned over to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), or any other security agency, at any time after 1983; (d) were any of the names or was any of the information about individuals named on the list ever shared with the Government of the United States or any of its security, policing or military bodies; (e) did any of the RCMP personnel who helped compile or maintain PROFUNC work for CSIS or other security agencies following the end of the program; and (f) what other materials were created by individuals working for PROFUNC between 1950-1983 (i.e., minutes of meetings, reports filed by security agents, other documents)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 5—Ms. Libby Davies:

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2009-2010, up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Vancouver East, identifying each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 6—Mr. Peter Stoffer:

With respect to the Veterans Burial Regulations and the Corporation named by the Department of Veterans Affairs Act to administer the Veterans Funeral and Burial program, specifically the Last Post Fund (LPF): (a) what is the annual amount of financial support and funding provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs from 2006 to 2011 inclusively; (b) what is the statistical information, provided to the minister, on reimbursements provided by the LPF to assist in payment of funeral and burial costs for the estates of (i) First World War veterans, (ii) Second World War veterans, (iii) Korean War veterans, (iv) estates of veterans who received a disability benefit from Veterans Affairs Canada, (v) estates of allied veterans; (c) what are the details of the annual administrative and operating costs of the LPF from 2006 to 2011 inclusively; (d) what are the details of the annual program costs of the Veterans Funeral and Burial Program from 2006 to 2011 inclusively; (e) what are the details of the annual salary costs for LPF staff from 2006 to 2011 inclusively; (f) what are the details of how frequently business plans, operating budgets, capital budgets and performance reports are submitted by the Corporation to the Minister; (g) what are the details of any departmental analysis concerning the raising of the means test for eligibility for support through the Veterans Funeral and Burial program; (h) what are the details of any departmental analysis concerning the extension of eligibility for a funeral and burial to all estate-tested Canadian Forces (CF) and RCMP veterans; (i) what is the estimated financial cost of extending eligibility to the Veterans Funeral and Burial program to all estate-tested CF and RCMP; (j) how often does the department conduct an assurance audit of the LPF; (k) when was the last time the government conducted an assurance audit of the LPF; and (l) when does the department plan to conduct the next assurance audit of the LPF?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 7—Mr. Peter Stoffer:

With respect to Canadian Forces veterans trying to obtain an end to the deduction of Pension Act disability payments from Service Income Security Insurance Plan (SISIP) Long Term Disability benefits: (a) what is the total amount of money spent by all departments and agencies, excluding the Department of Justice, from March 2007 to 2011 inclusively, on the defence against the SISIP class action lawsuit; (b) what is the total amount of money the government has spent to hire outside legal counsel, from March 2007 to 2011 inclusively, on the SISIP class action lawsuit; and (c) what is the total amount of money spent by all government departments and agencies on the SISIP class action lawsuit, from March 2007 to 2011 inclusively, including all costs associated with the work of the Department of Justice?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 8—Mr. Peter Stoffer:

With regard to veterans' long-term care facilities and veterans' contract beds in community care facilities: (a) what are all facilities, by province and territory, that are

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under contract by the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide veterans' beds; (b) for each facility identified in (a), what is (i) the number of beds, (ii) the average cost of a veteran's bed; (c) when, by facility and province or territory, does the department expect to close veterans' beds based on the declining population of its Second World War and Korean War veteran clientele; (d) what are the details of any departmental analysis concerning the expansion of the definition of eligible veterans for admittance to veterans' health care centres; (e) what are the details of any departmental analysis concerning the government's payment for veterans' beds at long-term care facilities or community care facilities for the spouses of Second World War and Korean War veterans; (f) does the department have any estimates of the cost of paying for veterans' beds at veterans' long-term care or community care facilities for the spouses of Second World War and Korean War veterans and, if so, what are they; (g) what, if any, are the plans for the long-term care of modern-day Canadian Forces (CF) veterans who require long-term care and do not meet the criteria for admittance to veterans' beds at veterans' long-term care or community care facilities; and (h) is the department engaged in any discussion of the development of specialized medical centres for modern-day CF and RCMP veterans?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 9—Mr. Peter Stoffer:

With regard to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB), legislated by the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act: (a) who are all permanent and temporary members of the Board, broken down by province and territory, appointed by the Governor in Council since 2006; (b) has the government considered disbanding the VRAB; (c) has the government considered modifying the VRAB; (d) has the government considered implementing a policy to ensure that VRAB appointees by the Governor in Council must have (i) military or RCMP experience, (ii) medical experience; (e) what were the total annual federal funds provided to the VRAB from 2006 to 2011 inclusively; (f) what is a breakdown of the annual spending of the VRAB, from 2006 to 2011 inclusively, as it relates to (i) program costs, (ii) administration costs, (iii) salary costs of the VRAB board members, (iv) travel costs for the VRAB board members, (v) VRAB staff costs, (vi) VRAB staff travel costs; (g) how many reports has the VRAB chairperson made to the Minister with respect to the use of resources allocated to the Board from 2006 to 2011 inclusively; (h) when was the last time the Department of Veterans Affairs completed an assurance audit of the VRAB and when is the department planning to conduct the next audit; (i) how often does the department conduct assurance audits of the VRAB; (j) has the department planned an extensive review of the administration of the VRAB; (k) does the Department of Veterans Affairs regularly analyze the reasons why pension decisions are overturned by the VRAB in favour of the client with regard to the interpretation of (i) legislation, (ii) medical issues, (iii) legal issues; (l) has the VRAB provided information to the department on how many pension decisions, made since the VRAB's inception, have been in favour of the veteran client using the benefit of the doubt clause (section 70); and (m) how many pension matters or cases has the VRAB referred back to the Minister for reconsideration, by year, from 2006 to 2011 inclusively?

(Return tabled)

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Question No. 10—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With respect to the full process currently being undertaken by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) regarding chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), including the August 26, 2010, meeting of the Scientific Expert Working Group (SEWG) and the CIHR's "knowledge synthesis review": (a) what is the accepted operating definition of "conflict of interest" for the CIHR, (i) why was no disclosure statement made by all participants who attended the August 26, 2010, joint meeting of the CIHR and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MSSC), (ii) are there plans to provide an opportunity to declare possible conflicts of interest subsequent to the meeting; (b) what are the details of all information produced and circulated by the CIHR in January 2011 regarding follow-up care for multiple sclerosis (MS) patients and to which organizations was the information sent; (c) will the disclosure statement to be signed by members of the SEWG at its next meeting in June 2011 include specific reference to any (i) consultancy, (ii) grant support, (iii) membership on advisory councils, (iv) speaker's bureau, (v) other sources of funding a member might have; (d) how does the CIHR plan to ensure that all members of the SEWG have the same understanding of private or personal interests that could influence decision-making; (e) will all disclosure statements in (c) be made publicly available and, if so, when, and, if not, why not; (f) which, if any, of the SEWG's members have been trained in Dr. Zamboni's methods and by whom were these members trained; (g) which, if any, of the SEWG's members have watched diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI and, for each member identified (i) where did this observation take place, (ii) under what guidance, (iii) how many images and treatments were studied by the member; (h) which, if any, of the SEWG's members have undertaken diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI and, for each member identified, (i) where were these actions performed, (ii) under what guidance, (iii) how many images and treatments were performed by the member; (i) does the CIHR recognize the emerging scientific discipline of neurovascular disease; (j) does the SEWG include any members of the International Society for NeuroVascular Disease (ISNVD) and, if so, who are these members, and, if not, why not; (k) which, if any, members of the SEWG have attended any of the ISNVD's conferences, specifying for each such member the conferences that he or she attended; (l) does the inclusion of investigators of the seven MS Society-funded studies in the SEWG comply with the CIHR's operating definition of "conflict of interest" and, if so, what are the reasons that explain this compliance; (m) regarding the "knowledge synthesis review", (i) what is the protocol for the review, (ii) how is research deemed to be, or not to be, pertinent, (iii) who specifically is undertaking the review, how were they chosen, and what expertise do they have to undertake the review, (iv) why has the CIHR decided to have them undertake the review, (v) what are the CIHR's reasons for not having the SEWG undertake the review, (vi) what is the cost of the review, (vii) what is a comprehensive list of abstracts to be reviewed, (viii) what additional material, people, or other sources will be consulted, (ix) will the review include scientific evidence presented at all the major scientific conferences on CCSVI to date, namely, Hamilton (February 2010), New York (July 2010), Washington (October 2010), Katowice (March 2011), Bologna (March 2011), Chicago (April 2011), and San Diego (May 2011), (x) will the review include contacting the leading experts in the field, asking for their unpublished data, visiting their laboratories and operating theatres, (xi) if the answer to (m)(x) is in the affirmative, what, if any, protocol has been established for each contact, and what, if any, weighting will be applied to this evidence; (n) how does the CIHR plan to weigh or assess the seven MS Society-funded studies and the "knowledge synthesis review" in its establishment of any future policy, particularly in its deliberations on whether to undertake clinical trials for CCSVI in Canada; (o) which, if any, members of the SEWG have attended any CCSVI conferences, specifying for each such member (i) what conferences he or she attended, (ii) in what capacity, (iii) who paid for the trip or attendance at the conference, (iv) what written evidence did he or she report to either the CIHR or SEWG, (v) if no written evidence was reported, why not; (p) which members of the CIHR have attended any CCSVI conferences, specifying for each such member (i) what conferences he or she attended, (ii) in what capacity, (iii) who paid for the trip or attendance at the conference, (iv) what written evidence he/she reported to either the CIHR or SEWG, (v) if no written evidence was reported, why not; (q) why has the CIHR decided not to further investigate CCSVI through clinical trials; (r) why has the CIHR decided not to follow recommendations made by the Ontario Association of Neurologists, the Canadian Society of Radiologists, the Canadian Society of Vascular Surgery, the American Society of Interventional Radiology, and the International Union of Phlebology regarding CCSVI; (s) what does the CIHR consider an "appropriate pace", a term used in its May 18, 2011, e-mail to Dr. Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament for Etobicoke North, for the introduction to Canada of any potential new medical treatment for any medical condition, and how much evidence does the CIHR consider is required before a treatment should undergo clinical trials in Canada in terms of (i) the number of procedures undertaken, (ii) the number of countries undertaking the procedure, (iii) scientific evidence presented in academic peer-reviewed journals, (iv) scientific evidence presented at academic

conferences, (v) scientific evidence presented at academic conferences for conditions that are progressive diseases, especially progressive diseases for which there are limited or no options for treatment; (t) what is the CIHR's accepted protocol, including all necessary steps, for bringing a new treatment to clinical trials in Canada, (i) when was the protocol established, (ii) what treatments have undergone clinical trials as a result of the protocol, (iii) which treatments have been rejected to date; (u) is the creation of a SEWG a standard step in the CIHR's protocol for bringing a new treatment to clinical trials in Canada, and, (i) if so, since the creation of the protocol, what are all new treatments and their associated SEWGs, (ii) if not, why was this step deemed necessary for approval of clinical trials for CCSVI; (v) what are the last five medical treatments for any medical condition accepted by the CIHR for use in Canada and, for each treatment, what are the details of all evidence required by the CIHR in its decision to have the treatment undergo clinical trials, including, but not limited to, the number of procedures undertaken, the countries undertaking the procedure, and scientific evidence presented in both peer-reviewed journals and academic conferences; and (w) with regard to the MS registry announced March 23, 2011, (i) who specifically is collecting the information, (ii) what precise information is being collected, (iii) what consent will be necessary from patients for any data collection, (iv) when will information begin to be collected, (v) what specific information is being collected regarding the treatment of CCSVI, (vi) what information is being gathered or tracking is being done of individuals who have chosen to have the liberation procedure outside Canada?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 11—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to depleted uranium (DU), military service, and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) benefits and programs: (a) what are all potential sources of DU to which Canadian Forces (CF) members and veterans might have been exposed between 1990 and the present; (b) what are any operations between 1990 and the present that might have brought CF members and veterans into direct or close contact with DU, including, but not limited to, operations in which Canadian personnel seconded to other military forces were involved; (c) did any CF member or veteran serve between 1999 and 2003 in areas assessed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to be DU areas; (d) what, if any, DU munitions, vehicles made with DU, or ships carrying DU munitions, were used by CF between 1990 and the present; (e) what are all possible exposure routes for each source of DU identified in (a), (b), and (d); (f) what, if any, field measurements were taken around any DU source identified in (a), (b), and (d) and, if such measurements were taken, what was the level of contamination of the environment for each site, for each time sampled; (g) what, if any, studies were undertaken by the Department of National Defence (DND), or any other federal government department or crown corporation, from 1990 to the present, regarding DU environmental contamination linked to the military and what were the chief findings of each such report, including (i) whether it identified a need or made a recommendation to work with caution in DU contaminated areas, (ii) whether it identified a need or made a recommendation to do policy work regarding DU contaminated areas; (h) what follow-up took place concerning the chief recommendations of each report identified in (g), as well as concerning the issues identified in each of (g)(i) and (g)(ii); (i) what, if any, clean-up operations were undertaken in impact zones between 1990 and the present, and, if such operations were undertaken, why was each clean-up operation deemed necessary, and what national or international recommendations were followed in each clean-up; (j) which, if any, experts were consulted to determine any possible DU contamination between 1990 and the present, and, if experts were consulted, who were they, and in what field or fields did each expert work; (k) what, if any, specific training, equipment and guidance was given to CF members and veterans who were required to work in areas of DU contamination or to conduct any DU field assessments and clean-ups; (l) what, if any, specific radiation field measurement and health and safety equipment was provided to CF members and veterans, including equipment used to determine the presence of DU, and what specific training was provided concerning the use of any such equipment; (m) what, if any, training, equipment and guidance was given to CF members and veterans concerning the handling of both intact and damaged weapons previously used to fire DU munitions; (n) from 1990 to the present (i) what was the CF's policy regarding transportation, use, exposure, risk mitigation, and testing of DU from 1990 to the present, (ii) how did or does the policy comply with all relevant guidelines and regulations for the protection of the environment and personnel, including, but not limited to, those established in the Canada Labour Code, by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, and through the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, (iii) were the guidelines and regulations identified in (ii) followed during CF operations abroad, (iv) how was the policy elaborated in (n)(i), enforced during CF activities both in Canada and abroad; (o) is there a protocol accepted by the government for urine testing for DU and what are its details, including, but not limited to, (i) who should be screened, (ii) following what exposures should screening occur, (iii) which laboratories were or are used for the screening, (iv) what criteria have been used to select the laboratory that conducts the screening and how can quality assurance in screening processes and results be ensured, (v) the maximum acceptable delay between DU exposure to initial screening, (vi) the screening method and how that method was chosen, (vii) the screening schedule, (viii) any follow-up mechanisms, (ix) how screening is documented, (x) when this protocol was accepted; (p) what, if any, screening procedure exists for potential DU exposure for CF members and veterans, including, but not limited to, (i) an exposure questionnaire, (ii) a 24-hour urine collection test, (iii) a detailed physical exam, (iv) clinical tests of organ systems function; (q) what, if any, DU follow-up program or similar program intended to screen and monitor health problems associated with DU exposure is available to CF members and veterans; (r) what, if any, CF members or veterans have been identified and tracked following potential exposure to DU through situations related to (a), (b) and (d), and what was involved in the tracking procedures, specifying whether the tracking included (i) urinary uranium determinations, (ii) clinical laboratory values, (iii) psychiatric and neuro-cognitive assessments, (iv) other forms of tracking; (s) what, if any, summary statistics are now available for cases identified in (r); (t) what, if any, CF members or veterans have been identified and tracked following exposure to (i) vehicles hit with friendly fire, (ii) burning vehicles, (iii) fires involving DU munitions, (iv) the inspection or salvaging of damaged vehicles; (u) what, if any, information is given to CF members or veterans who might have been exposed to harmful DU conditions, and, specifically, how is this information relayed; (v) can CF members or veterans who might have been exposed to harmful DU conditions ask to be screened for DU exposure, if not, why

not, and, if so, (i) what procedure do they follow, (ii) who does the testing, (iii) what is the cost of the testing; (w) what are the potential health effects from (i) external exposure to DU, for both low and high dosages, in both the short term and the long term, and (ii) internal exposure to DU, for both low and high dosages, in both the short term and the long term; (x) what, if any, CF members or veterans have applied for compensation associated with DU exposure during military service, specifying (i) the number of requests, (ii) whether compensation was awarded, (iii) whether compensation is pending, (iv) whether compensation is in appeal, (v) how many appeals have been made; (y) have any of DND's medical or surgical members ever identified a possible link between a CF member's service or a veteran's service, exposure to DU, and particular health effects, and, if so, (i) how many times has such a possible link been made by DND's medical or surgical members, (ii) what follow-up occurred as a result of any identified possible linkages; and (z) does the government have plans to convene a working group to review the latest research on hazardous materials exposure, including, but not limited to, exposure to DU, and possible health effects and, if so, (i) what is the planned scope of the review, (ii) who is to convene the working group, (iii) how are experts to be chosen, (iv) how are conflicts of interest to be avoided and declared, (vi) what is the timeline for the review and the review's milestones?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 12—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), the liberation treatment, and multiple sclerosis (MS): (a) what consensus documents have been published regarding the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, (i) by whom, (ii) on what dates, (iii) what were the recommendations, (iv) were they reviewed by the August 26, 2010, meeting of the CIHR in collaboration with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MSSC); (b) why were Canadian members of the International Union of Phlebology (IUP), who were part of the consensus process regarding the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, not consulted during the August 26 meeting of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR); (c) what are the details of any plan the government has or is developing to collect evidence regarding the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, for example, through clinical trials or the creation of a registry; (d) what percentage of surgical procedures in Canada have been double-blind tested over the last 40 years and, for this percentage, (i) what is the risk of complication, (ii) what is considered an acceptable risk of complication, (iii) how do physicians judge acceptable risk and convey this risk to their patients, (iv) what actions do physicians take to reduce risk if the patient chooses to undertake the procedure; (e) when a medical treatment appears to be potentially effective, is its approval ever fast-tracked by the relevant Canadian authorities and, if so, (i) what are any examples of this in Canada over the last five years, (ii) has this ever happened with respect to MS, (iii) if so, who advocated for a fast-tracking and when, (iv) what process was followed to allow the treatment, (v) who made the decision to proceed, (vi) why was fast-tracking deemed necessary, (vii) what were the known risks at the time of the request, (viii) what, if any, negative impacts resulted; (f) what are the reasons for the length of time it has taken the relevant Canadian authorities to implement clinical trials or to develop a registry; (g) why did no member of the August 26 group declare any conflicts of interest, either real or perceived; (h) how many liberation procedures did the August 26 group estimate have been undertaken, (i) which countries were undertaking the procedure, (ii) to which countries were Canadians travelling, (iii) were the practitioners considered to be sufficiently trained, (iv) were the procedures in these countries found to be safe; (i) which people, labs and operating theatres had undertaken the diagnosis or treatment of CCSVI in Canada prior to the August 26 meeting; (j) why did the August 26 meeting not include Canadian experts in the imaging or treatment of CCSVI and for what reasons was Dr. Sandy McDonald not included as a participant; (k) why did the August 26 meeting not include international experts in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, data presented at international scientific conferences or site visits to labs and operating theatres, which were or had been undertaking diagnosis or treatment; (l) what is a comprehensive explanation of why the inclusion of CCSVI and liberation experts might have biased the sample of the August 26 group and whether such selection is an established practice at all CIHR meetings; (m) what are all the names of the group members who had spoken out against diagnosis or treatment of CCSVI or the liberation procedure prior to the August 26 meeting, what were the details of their positions, and what are their publicly-available comments on the matter; (n) who were all the members of the August 26 group and, for each member, what were his or her stated or declared conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interest; (o) what was the August 26 group's assessment of and comments concerning all reviewed published papers, including both positive and negative observations; (p) did the August 26 group find it unusual that two of the reviewed papers had been accepted for publication in only six weeks, (i) did the group review whether this is a common practice in medicine, (ii) did the group consider how and why this might happen, (iii) did the group explore the expertise of those writing the papers, their experience, how their results compared with those of Dr. Zamboni and, if so, (iv) what were the group's findings for questions posed in (iii); (q) which neurologists, present at the August 26 meeting, had followed MS patients who were diagnosed with CCSVI and who had been treated for the condition, (i) how had neurologists followed them (e.g., appointment, EDSS score/another scale, MRI, neurological exam, etc.), (ii) what, if any, evidence did they present of patients' progress following the liberation procedure; (r) did the August 26 group find the reversal in the MSSC's position, who was part of the greater group, unusual, (i) did the group investigate or consider the reasons for this change in position and, if so, (ii) what observations did it make or conclusions did it come to regarding the reversal; (s) did the August 26 group estimate how its decision might impact Canadian MS patients, including (i) impacts on their mental health and how this might impact their disease, (ii) the number of Canadian MS patients who might feel forced to seek help outside Canada, (iii) how air travel, a compromised vascular system, recent surgery, and lack of follow-up in Canada might impact their disease and, if so, (iv) what are the results of those estimations; (t) what consensus documents are forthcoming, (i) by whom, (ii) when will they be published; (u) what is the work plan for the new expert working group which met for the first time on November 23, 2010, (i) who are the panellists, what are their qualifications and what is their expertise in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, (ii) how were the panellists chosen and by whom, (iii) what is the group's mandate and how was it derived, (iv) what is the schedule of meetings, (v) what is the

timeline for the group's work, (vi) what evidence will be reviewed to reach any decision about possible clinical trials, registry, diagnosis, treatment, follow-up care, etc.; (v) what was the agenda for the November 23 meeting of the expert working group, (i) what abstracts, documents, and presentations were reviewed, (ii) which Canadian and international experts, with experience in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, were consulted, (iii) what Canadian and international unpublished data were explored, (iv) what Canadian and international labs or operating theatres were reviewed and visited; (w) for what reasons is the new group going to analyze interim and final results from seven studies funded by the Canadian and US MS Societies and why are these studies considered more worthwhile cases for analysis than other studies already completed; (x) when will the November 23 expert panel declare and post any conflicts of interest, following the European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis (ECTRIMS) guide, on the CIHR website to eliminate the possibility of real or perceived conflicts; and (y) further to assurances made by the President of CIHR, Dr. Alain Beaudet, to the Subcommittee on Neurological Diseases on December 7, 2010, that MS patients who have had the liberation procedure would have follow-up, what are the details of how that follow-up will occur, specifically, (i) how will "a message be sent", by whom, to whom, by when and what will the message be, (ii) specifically, will all patients who travel or travelled outside Canada be assured that their doctors will see them, that appointments will not be cancelled, that tests will not be cancelled, that they will have access to recommended prescriptions, that they will not lose their long-term care and that they will not be berated for making the decision to have liberation, (iii) how will this be enforced, (iv) what action should MS patients take if they are denied care, (v) to whom should they report a denial of care, (vi) what are the consequences for a physician or health practitioner or organization who delivers care but fails to provide follow-up care, (vii) will follow-up include ultrasound or MRI to image the veins of MS patients and, if so, how often will these imaging procedures occur and who will pay for them?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 13—Ms. Olivia Chow:

With regard to the Champlain Bridge in Montreal: (a) what is the volume of correspondence in which a new bridge is requested or complaints are made about traffic congestion as a result of the maintenance and repair of the bridge as received by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, or Transport Canada from (i) individuals, (ii) organizations, (iii) elected representatives; (b) what is the total number of petition signatures received from individuals requesting the construction of a new bridge; (c) what are the names and addresses of the organizations that submitted correspondence as per (a)(ii); and (d) what is the government's reason for not funding the replacement of the Champlain Bridge?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 14—Ms. Olivia Chow:

With regard to infrastructure project applications made under Canada's Economic Action Plan: (a) what is the total number of project applications approved, broken down (i) by municipality, (ii) by electoral district in each municipality; (b) what is the total number of project applications rejected, broken down (i) by municipality, (ii) by electoral district in each municipality; and (c) broken down by municipality, what project applications were rejected and, for each, what was (i) the reason for the rejection, (ii) the amount of funding requested, (iii) the electoral district in which the project would have been completed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 17—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the Small Craft Harbours Program and the \$3.2 million announced on April 23, 2010, by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to improve small craft harbours in Prince Edward Island: (a) how much of the \$3.2 million was spent in fiscal year 2010-2011; (b) how much was identified to be spent in 2010-2011; (c) where was the money spent; and (d) how much money was spent on each harbour?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 18—Mr. Malcolm Allen:**

With respect to the Investment Canada Act and foreign corporate takeovers of Canadian companies: (a) on an annual and monthly basis from January 1, 1993 to December 31, 2010, how many takeovers were (i) approved, (ii) rejected; (b) for each takeover, what was the aggregate value of acquisition (i) federally, on an annual and monthly basis, (ii) by province, on an annual and monthly basis; (c) distributed federally, on an annual and monthly basis, and by province, on an annual and monthly basis, what are the takeovers, further distributed by the industry sectors (i) resources, (ii) manufacturing, (iii) wholesale and retail trades, (iv) business and service industries, (v) other; (d) in which year since January 1, 1993, did the most foreign takeovers of Canadian companies occur; (e) what is the current position of the government on foreign takeovers; (f) has the Investment Canada Act mandate changed since it was created and, if so, when and how, specifying the details of all amendments to the mandate; (g) in regard to takeovers approved between January 1, 1993 and December 31, 2010, what are the number of jobs affected by these takeovers as submitted by the investors as part of the application for review; (h) how many times has the Competition Policy Review Panel met on an annual and monthly basis, and broken down federally and by province, since its creation; (i) what changes to the Investment Canada Act has the Competition Policy Review Panel recommended; and (j) what other actions have been taken by the government to review the Competition Act and Investment Canada Act?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 22—Mr. Pierre Nantel:

With regard to the Prime Minister's presence at a National Hockey League finals game in Boston: (a) what was the total cost of the trip; (b) how much did the flight cost; (c) how many staff members, ministers, parliamentary secretaries and public servants accompanied the Prime Minister; (d) which departments paid the travel costs; (e) what were the total hospitality expenses incurred; (f) what organization or person invited the Prime Minister to the game; (g) what are the names of the public servants and staff members from the Prime Minister's Office that accompanied the Prime Minister on this trip; (h) how much did on-site security cost; and (i) who paid for the tickets?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 25—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to bonuses granted by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, for each of fiscal years 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, how many bonuses were dispersed and what were the amounts of these bonuses, broken down by: (a) fiscal year; (b) individual personnel; (c) region; and (d) departmental division?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 26—Hon. John McCallum:

With respect to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the government's commitment of \$2.85 billion over 5 years for the Muskoka Initiative: (a) for each project or program that qualifies for the renewed \$1.75 billion in existing funding, (i) what is its name and objective, (ii) what is the total federal funding commitment, (iii) what is the timeframe for the project or program; (b) for each program or project that qualifies for the new \$1.1 billion in funding announced on February 1, 2011, (i) what is its name and objective, (ii) what is the total federal funding commitment, (iii) what is the timeframe for the project or program; (c) for each of the bilateral, multilateral and partnership branches, (i) which partner and country is receiving funding, (ii) how much funding is each partner and country receiving; and (d) what plans does the government have to inform Parliament and the public regarding this spending?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 27—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to departmental spending from 2006 to present, what were the total costs of rentals and purchases of individual staging, lighting and audio equipment, and production and assorted technical costs for all government announcements and public events?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 29—Mr. Claude Gravelle:

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2006-2007 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Nickel Belt, specifying each (i) department or agency, (ii) initiative, (iii) amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 30—Mr. Claude Gravelle:

With regard to grants and contributions applications to federal economic development agencies since April 1, 2010, what funding applications were approved by departmental officials but rejected by the Minister's office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 31—Mr. Claude Gravelle:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at federal economic development agencies: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid off as of April 1, 2011; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees have been hired since April 1, 2011; and (e) what programs will be subject to funding cuts as of April 1, 2011?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 33—Mr. Frank Valeriote:

With regard to government funding within the constituency of Guelph: (a) what was the total amount offunding originally announced, broken down by fiscal year, since fiscal year 2006-2007, up to and including fiscal year 2010-2011, specifying for each announcement (i) the department or agency responsible for the funding, (ii) the program or initiative from which the funding came, (iii) the project name, (iv) the total value of the project; (b) for each announcement identified in (a) what was, (i) the total amount delivered, broken down by fiscal year, since fiscal year 2006-2007, up to and including fiscal year 2010-2011, (ii) the department or agency responsible for the delivered funding, (iii) the program or initiative from which the delivered funding came, (iv) the project name, (v) the total value of the project; and (c) broken down by fiscal year, since fiscal year 2006-2007, up to and including fiscal year 2010-2011, in each case where the final, total amount delivered, as specified in (b), was different from the funding amount announced, as specified in (a), what was the reason for this discrepancy?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 34—Ms. Olivia Chow:

With regard to infrastructure funding requests since 2006, broken down by infrastructure funding program, including but not limited to the Public Transit Fund, the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the Border Infrastructure Fund, the Infrastructure Canada Program, the Green Infrastructure Fund, and the Building Canada Fund: (a) how many applications for funding have been received; (b) how many applications have been rejected; (c) what is each application that has been rejected, including the date of application; (d) for applications identified in (c), what was the reason for rejection; (e) for applications identified in (c), what was the electoral district of the proposed project; and (f) how many applications are pending decision?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 35—Mr. Scott Simms:

With respect to government decentralization: (a) does the government have any information on proposals prepared since 2006 on the relocation, from the National Capital area to other regions of Canada, of (i) government departments or parts thereof, (ii) agencies, (iii) Crown corporations; and (b) does the government have any information on assessments completed since 2006 on which of the following entities could be relocated from the National Capital area to other regions of Canada, namely, (i) government departments or parts thereof, (ii) agencies, (iii) Crown corporations?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 36—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to employment in the federal public service: (a) for the period of January 1, 2005, to May 31, 2011, (i) how many people were hired by the federal public service, (ii) how many casual employees were hired by the federal public service, (iii) how many term employees were hired by the federal public service, (iv) how many indeterminate employees were hired by the federal public service, (v) how many applications for priority employment appointments in the federal public service were submitted by qualified medically released members of the Canadian Forces, (vi) how many qualified medically released members of the Canadian Forces have received a priority employment appointment, (vii) how many qualified medically released members of the Canadian Forces were still on the priority employment appointment list when their eligibility period expired; (b) for the period of 2005 to the present, how many qualified medically released Canadian Forces veterans were hired by each department; and (c) what measures are being taken to extend the priority employment appointments program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 37—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With respect to the statements by the Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of the Environment, entitled “Canada’s Green Budget 2009” and “Minister Prentice Highlights the Environment in 2010 Budget”: (a) how many applications were submitted under the 2009 \$1 billion investment in clean energy research, development and demonstration projects, and, for each project identified, (i) who was the applicant and in what sector does the applicant work, (ii) what was the amount of funding requested, (iii) what were the projected outcomes, (iv) what was the projected return on investment; (b) what, in detail, are all of the clean energy research development and demonstration projects awarded funds through the 2009 \$1 billion investment, and, for each project identified, (i) who was the recipient of the funds and in what sector does the recipient work, (ii) what was the amount of funding requested, (iii) what was the amount of funding awarded, (iv) what were the projected outcomes, (v) what was the projected return on investment, (vi) has the project been started, is it in progress, or has it been completed, (vii) what, if any, findings, publications, contracts, etc., have resulted from the project, (viii) in what geographic area was the project located; (c) what monies of the 2009 \$1 billion investment for clean energy research development and demonstration projects have been spent, (i) what monies remain available, (ii) what, if any, advertising did or does the government undertake to promote the program, (iii) what, if any, costs are associated with any advertising of the program; (d) how many project applications were submitted under the 2009 \$1 billion Green Infrastructure Fund, and, for each project identified, (i) who was the applicant and in what sector does the applicant work, (ii) what was the amount of funding requested, (iii) what were the projected outcomes, (iv) what was the projected return on investment; (e) how many projects were awarded funding through the \$1 billion Green Infrastructure Fund, and, for each project identified, (i) who was the recipient of the funds and in what sector does the recipient work, (ii) what was the amount of funding awarded, (iii) what were the projected outcomes in terms of reductions in emissions, waste, or other environmental payoffs, (iv) what was the projected return on investment, (v) has the project been started, is it in progress, or has it been completed, (vi) what, if any, findings, publications, contracts, or other significant results have been produced as a result of the project; (f) how many retrofits were undertaken under the 2009 \$300 million eco-ENERGY Retrofit program, (i) what was the average cost of a retrofit, (ii) what was the average income of the family or individual undertaking a retrofit, (iii) what was the average household savings on energy, (iv) what was the average household savings in terms of money spent on energy annually, (v) what is the estimated savings to the environment each year, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs); (g) what specific projects were undertaken to maintain federal laboratories for \$250 million in 2009, (i) why did the government identify these projects as investments in the environment, (ii) what laboratories benefited, and what was the investment per lab, (iii) what specific laboratories need maintenance or further maintenance; (h) what specific projects, by station, were undertaken or are being undertaken under the \$85 million for key Arctic research stations, why did the government identify these projects as investments in the environment, and, for each project identified, (i) what was the investment, (ii) what is the life expectancy of the investment, (iii) is further work needed, (iv) what projects does the government know still require funding; (i) what progress has been made to date on the \$2 million investment in a feasibility study for a world-class Arctic research station, (i) what was the mandate of the feasibility study, (ii) what was its start date, key milestones, and end date, (iii) what, if any, results are available; (j) what are all federal contaminated sites across Canada, and, for each contaminated site identified, (i) where specifically is the site located, (ii) has the site had an environmental assessment (iii) if so, what are the main contaminants at the site, what is the projected

cost of remediation, (iv) if not, what is the projected cost of an environmental assessment and the time required for that assessment; (k) is there a priority list for addressing contaminated sites listed in (j), and if so, (i) in what order do the sites appear on that list, (ii) what methodology is used to establish priority, (iii) who undertakes any priority assessments, what are their expertise, and how are experts chosen; (l) how much of the \$80.5 million set aside for assessment of federal contaminated sites has been spent to date and what, if any, monies are remaining, (i) how many assessments have been started, are in progress, or have been completed to date, (ii) what are the findings for any completed assessment in terms of the environmental contamination, any threats to human health, and the projected cost of remediation, (iii) how many jobs have been created to date; (m) how much of the \$165 million set aside for remediation of federal contaminated sites has been spent to date and what, if any, monies are remaining, (i) what remediation projects are started, are in progress, or have been completed to date, (ii) what are the findings for any completed remediation in terms of reducing environmental contamination and any threats to human health, (iii) what is the cost or projected cost of all remediation projects identified in (m)(i), (iv) how many jobs have been created to date; (n) what specific national parks projects have been undertaken with the \$75 million earmarked in 2009, and, for each project identified, (i) what is the park’s name, (ii) what is its location, (iii) what is the total investment, (iv) what is a description of the project; (o) what, if any, progress has the government made on its 2009 \$10 million investment in annual reporting of key environmental indicators such as clean air, clean water and GHG emissions, (i) what system was in place for reporting each, (ii) what, if any, system is now in place, (iii) when will the government make use of improvements in data resulting from this investment in its reports; (p) what, if any, progress has the government made on its 2010 \$18.4 million investment to enhance the tracking of environmental data through the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators program, (i) what specific projects does the government plan to undertake with the money and, for each project identified, (ii) how much money will be spent, (iii) how will monies spent improve environmental reporting, (iv) when will the government use improvements in its reports; (q) what, if any, action has been taken on the 2010 \$100 million Next Generation Renewable Power Initiative; (r) what, if any, consultation regarding environmental assessments has taken place with Aboriginal peoples in 2010, (i) identify all projects that affect Aboriginal communities, (ii) on which of the identified projects in (r)(i) have Aboriginal peoples been consulted to date; (s) how much of the \$2.8 million earmarked for consultations with Aboriginal communities has been spent and how much is still available; (t) what are all contaminated Great Lake sites and where specifically is each site located, (i) what is a ranking of these contaminated sites, (ii) what is the method used to determine levels of contamination, (iii) what is the scale used to compare levels of contamination, (iv) what is the government’s definition of “most degraded”, (v) what are all “most degraded” sites, (vi) for each site identified in (t)(v), what is a description of the contamination and what is the cost of the remediation; and (u) what specifically is the \$16 million ear-marked for to clean up the “most-degraded” Great Lakes sites, what monies have been spent to date, on what specific projects, and what is the projected return on investment in terms of the environment?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 39—Ms. Judy Foote:

With regard to the recent changes in the way with which Service Canada community outreach offices’ services will be delivered: (a) what is the rationale for changing the way in which Service Canada has been operating across Canada; (b) how much money will be saved through these changes; (c) how many Service Canada community offices will be closed because of this decision; (d) how many people will lose their jobs as a result of this decision; and (e) what are the supposed benefits of such changes?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 40—Ms. Judy Foote:

With regard to the way with which Service Canada will now be delivering services and the increased emphasis on accessing government services via the Internet: (a) what is the government’s plan to address rural Canadians’ lack of access to basic Internet; (b) what is the government’s plan to ensure that rural Canadians who have no access to an Internet connection can access government programs and services in a timely manner; and (c) what is the government’s plan to ensure that Canadians are technologically literate and capable of using the Internet to access essential government services?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 41—Ms. Judy Foote:**

With respect to government spending in the constituency of Random—Burin—St. George's, what was the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, itemized according to: (a) the date the money was received in the riding; (b) the dollar amount of the expenditure; (c) the program from which the funding came; (d) the ministry responsible; and (e) the designated recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 42—Ms. Judy Foote:

With regard to the 2010 round of strategic reviews described and implemented in Budget 2011, specifically for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Marine Atlantic and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans: (a) what changes does the government intend to implement in order to make the delivery of its programs and services more effective and efficient; (b) what is the rationale for these changes; (c) what are the projected savings; and (d) what are the projected staffing changes to full-time labour, part-time labour and contract labour as a result of the government's changes to the ways it delivers programs and services, broken down by (i) department, (ii) change?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 43—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to the departmental name change of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), announced on May 18, 2011, and effective June 13, 2011: (a) what is the government's rationale for the name change, specifically the rationale for (i) replacing "Indian Affairs" with "Aboriginal Affairs", (ii) replacing "Northern Affairs" with "Northern Development"; (b) did a consultation process take place on the implications of the name change, and, if so, (i) with which individuals and organizations, (ii) on which dates, (iii) what recommendations resulted from these consultations; (c) what is the expected impact on First Nation inherent and treaty rights; (d) does the government plan to commit additional resources to programs for Inuit, Métis, non-status Indians and urban Aboriginals; and (e) what is the expected cost of implementing the name change?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 45—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to the government's investments in on-reserve housing for First Nations: (a) what is the total annual expenditure on new on-reserve housing construction; (b) what is the total annual expenditure on repair of existing on-reserve housing; (c) which government departments or agencies provide investments in this area; (d) what is the government's statutory responsibility for on-reserve housing; (e) what was the annual expenditure in fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, distributed by department and program activity; and (f) what is the estimated annual expenditure in fiscal years 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, distributed by department and program activity?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 47—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to Western Economic Diversification (WED): (a) what was the total dollar value of repayable contributions and of repayable portions of partially-repayable contributions, made during fiscal years (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011; (b) what is the total dollar amount repaid from contributions identified in (a); (c) what was the total value of non-repayable contributions made during fiscal years (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011; (d) for each non-repayable contribution made in fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, (i) which organization or individual received the contribution, (ii) what was the total dollar amount received, (iii) for what purpose was the contribution granted, (iv) who gave final approval for the contribution; (e) how many contracts were issued by WED in fiscal years (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011; and (f) for each contract issued in fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, (i) which organization or individual received the contract, (ii) was the contract tendered or sole-sourced, (iii) if the contract was sole-sourced, why, (iv) if the contract was sole-sourced, who gave final approval, (v) what was the total dollar amount for each contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 48—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to Western Economic Diversification (WED): (a) what is the total number of applications for green innovation and clean technology projects approved in fiscal year (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011; (b) which organization or individual received funding for each project in (a); (c) what dollar amount of funding was granted to each project in (a); (d) what was the total dollar amount of funding granted by WED to projects in (a) in fiscal year (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011; (e) for each of the fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, what percentage of WED's total expenses is comprised by the amount specified in the answers to (d)(i), (d)(ii), (d)(iii) and (d)(iv), respectively; (f) what is the total number of applications for green innovation and clean technology projects rejected in fiscal year (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011; and (g) for each project application in (f), what was (i) the dollar amount of funding requested, (ii) the reason for the rejection?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 49—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to oil tanker spills on Canada's coasts: (a) how many oil spills occurred from 1980 to 2011; and (b) for each spill that occurred during this time period, (i) where was the spill located, (ii) from what type of vessel did the spill originate, (iii) what was the carrying capacity of the vessel, (iv) how many cubic litres or barrels of oil was spilled, (v) what was the grade of the oil product spilled, (vi) what measures did the government take to respond to the spill, (vii) what measures did the government take to clean up the spill, (viii) how long did it take to execute (b)(vi) and (b)(vii), (ix) what was the total cost of (b)(vi) and (b)(vii), (x) if applicable, for what dollar amount or percentage of the costs attributed to (b)(vi) and (b)(vii) was the operating company of the vessel held liable, (xi) if applicable, what was the total dollar amount collected from the operating company for (b)(vi) and (b)(vii)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 50—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to temporary resident visas: (a) for each fiscal year from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011, how many applications for temporary resident visas were received by the Canadian offices in (i) Beijing, (ii) Hong Kong, (iii) Shanghai, (iv) New Delhi, (v) Mumbai, (vi) Chandigarh, (vii) Jakarta, (viii) Seoul, (ix) Kuala Lumpur, (x) Islamabad, (xi) Manila, (xii) Singapore, (xiii) Colombo, (xiv) Bangkok, (xv) Ho Chi Minh City, (xvi) Dhaka, (xvii) Mexico City, (xviii) Guadalajara, (xvix) Monterrey, (xx) Prague; and (b) how many applications were issued by the offices listed in (a) for fiscal years (i) 2006-2007, (ii) 2007-2008, (iii) 2008-2009, (iv) 2009-2010, (v) 2010-2011?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 52—Mr. Scott Andrews:

With regard to Industry Canada and, more specifically, funding that has been provided through the department for broadband initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador: (a) broken down by fiscal year, from 2007-2008 to date, (i) what specific amounts of funding have been approved for projects and under what program was the funding approved, (ii) what are the specific details of each project, (iii) when was the funding approved, (iv) how much funding was requested in the application, (v) who were the applicants for each project; (b) broken down by fiscal year, from 2007-2008 to date, (i) how many applications were submitted that did not receive funding, (ii) what were the individual requested amounts for each application, (iii) who were the applicants for each specific application; and (c) broken down by fiscal year, from 2007-2008 to date, what were the total amounts of funding provided for broadband projects in Canada?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 53—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to Transport Canada and, more specifically, fees that have been collected from vessel owners, vessel operators and all marine traffic users as a result of access or entry to any port located geographically in Placentia Bay, for fiscal years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010: (a) what fees have been paid to the government or any department, federal corporation or agency; and (b) what has been the reason or purpose of these collected fees and what are the specific amounts for each reason or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 55—Mrs. Maria Mourani:

With regard to the Integrated Relocation Program (IRP), the contract for which was awarded to Brookfield Relocation Services in 2009, and for the period from April 1, 2010, to March 31, 2011: (a) how many relocation files were opened during this period; (b) what is the number of relocation files for each of the various departments and agencies, as well as the tenant-owner breakdown; and (c) for employee transfers involving the sale of property, what are the names of the "listing" real estate agents or brokers and their agencies?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 60—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:

With respect to benefits paid to Deputy Ministers (DM) of government departments, broken down both by individual and by department, what is the amount of benefits paid to DMs, including, but not limited to: (a) club memberships or membership discounts for personal recreation or socializing purposes, such as fitness clubs, golf clubs or social clubs; (b) season tickets to cultural or sporting events; (c) access to private health clinics and medical services outside those provided by provincial healthcare systems or by the employer's group insured benefit plans; and (d) professional advisory services for personal matters, such as financial, tax or estate planning?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 61—Mr. Andrew Cash:

With regard to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and its programs and initiatives related to homelessness and affordable housing: (a) how much funding is dedicated to the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP); (b) what is the status of the RRAP with regard to program delivery for fiscal years 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014; (c) what is the status of any agreements with the provinces with regard to delivery of the RRAP, and, if no agreements are in place, what is the status of any negotiations with the provinces with regard to delivery of the RRAP; (d) broken down by electoral district, by fiscal year, how many applications for funding under the RRAP have been (i) received, (ii) approved, (iii) rejected; (e) broken down by electoral district, by fiscal year, (i) what are all applications approved for funding under the RRAP, including the amount of funding approved, (ii) what are all applications denied funding under the RRAP, including the amount of funding requested and the reason for the rejection; (f) how much funding is dedicated to the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI); (g) what is the status of the AHI with regard to program delivery for fiscal years 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014; (h) what is the status of any agreements with the provinces, with regard to delivery of the AHI, and, if no agreements are in place, what is the status of any negotiations with the provinces with regard to delivery of the AHI; (i) broken down by electoral district, by fiscal year, how many applications for funding under the AHI have been (i) received, (ii) approved, (iii) rejected; (j) broken down by electoral district, by fiscal year, (i) what are all applications approved for funding under the AHI, including the amount of funding approved, (ii) what are all applications denied funding under the AHI, including the amount of funding requested and the reason for rejection; (k) how much funding is dedicated to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS); (l) what is the status of the HPS with regard to program delivery for the fiscal years 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014; (m) what is the status of any agreements with the provinces, with regard to delivery of the HPS, and, if no agreements are in place, what is the status of any negotiations with the provinces with regard to delivery of the HPS; (n) broken down by electoral district, by fiscal year, how many applications for funding under the HPS have been (i) received, (ii) approved, (iii) rejected; (o) broken down by electoral district, by fiscal year, (i) what are all applications approved for funding under the HPS, including the amount of funding approved, (ii) what are all applications denied funding under the HPS, including the amount of funding requested and the reason for rejection; (p) broken down by year and by type of funding, since 2006, how many new units of affordable

housing have been built using CMHC funding; (q) how many people are currently on waiting lists for affordable housing, broken down by (i) province, (ii) municipality; and (r) since 2006, what was the average number of people on a waiting list for affordable housing, broken down (i) by province and year, (ii) by municipality and year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 63—Mr. Andrew Cash:

With regard to the Georgetown South rail line: (a) what is the total volume of correspondence received by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and by departments for which the minister is responsible calling for the electrification of the rail line from (i) individuals, (ii) organizations, (iii) elected officials; (b) what is the total number of petition signatures received by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and by departments for which the minister is responsible calling for the electrification of the rail line; (c) what are the names and addresses of all organizations in (a); (d) since 2006, what reports has the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and the departments for which the minister is responsible produced or received regarding (i) the health impacts of diesel trains in urban centres, (ii) the benefits of electrification of urban rail, (iii) the noise pollution of diesel trains; (e) what, if any, federal funding has been provided for the Georgetown South rail line; (f) if federal funding was provided for the Georgetown South rail line, were any conditions put in place requiring the electrification of the rail line; and (g) what is the government's position on making the electrification of urban rail lines a condition for receiving federal funding for transit projects contained within an urban area?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 64—Hon. Bob Rae:

With regard to the situation in Haiti following the recent earthquake: (a) at what meetings has the government participated where there were discussions concerning the promotion of effective leadership and good governance in Haiti; (b) what measures has the government undertaken to ensure that the money pledged to Haiti is getting delivered on the ground; (c) has the government looked into any other assistance programs besides direct economic aid to help the people of Haiti; and (d) what measures has the government taken to reopen the embassy in Haiti and restore consular services?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 65—Hon. Bob Rae:

With regard to consular services: (a) what briefing notes has the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade received or produced regarding consular services in response to recent events in the Arab World Middle East and Northern Africa; (b) what measures has the government taken to ensure the safety of Canadians living abroad in response to recent events in the Middle East and Northern Africa; (c) what is the projected budget for consular services abroad over the next 3 years; (d) what impact will any changes in the projected budget for consular services have on the number of personnel working in consular affairs outside of Canada; and (e) what impact will any changes in the projected budget for consular services have on the number of personnel working in consular affairs inside Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 67—Mr. Sean Casey:

With respect to the New Veterans Charter, the tax-free, lump-sum Disability Award, and the tax-free, lump-sum Death Benefit, between April 2005 and June 2011: (a) how many recipients of the lump-sum Disability Award or the Death Benefit filed a complaint with the Department of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) about either benefit; (b) how many Disability Award or Death Benefit files have been forwarded to the Deputy Minister or Minister of Veterans Affairs' attention; (c) what was the nature of the problems associated with each case forwarded to the Minister in (b); (d) after receiving a lump-sum payment, how many recipients or their dependants requested additional funds; (e) has VAC experienced cost savings associated with the granting of the lump-sum Disability Award and Death Benefit, as compared to other longer-term assistance measures such as, but not limited to, the disability pension and health care benefits; (f) has VAC reviewed or evaluated the lump-sum Disability Award and Death Benefit programs; and (g) what findings or conclusions have been made by any reviews or evaluations in (f)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 69—Mr. Sean Casey:

With respect to Agent Orange and Canadian veterans trying to obtain fair compensation for their exposure to Agent Orange spraying at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown: (a) what is the total amount of money spent by all federal departments and agencies, excluding the Department of Justice, on the defence against the Canadian veterans' Agent Orange class action lawsuit (i) from July 1, 2005, to June 1, 2011, (ii) from March 5, 2010, to June 1, 2011; (b) what is the total amount of money the government has spent to hire outside legal counsel in its defence against the Canadian veterans' Agent Orange class action lawsuit (i) from July 1, 2005, to June 1, 2011, (ii) from March 5, 2010, to June 1, 2011; and (c) what is the total amount of money spent all federal departments and agencies, including all costs associated with the work of Department of Justice officials, on the defence against the Canadian veterans' Agent Orange class action lawsuit (i) from January 1, 2009, to June 1, 2011, (ii) from March 5, 2010, to June 1, 2011?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 70—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to grants and contributions since 2008 at the Public Health Agency of Canada, what funding applications were approved by departmental officials but rejected by the Minister's office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 72—Hon. Mauril Bélanger:

With regard to public opinion polling across all governmental departments since January 1, 2011: (a) how many polls were conducted by each department; and (b) for each poll, what (i) was the subject matter of the poll, (ii) questions were asked, (iii) was the sample size, (iv) was the period of time in which the poll was conducted, (v) were the results, (vi) was the department for which the poll was conducted?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 74—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to grants and contributions since 2008 at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, what funding applications were approved by departmental officials but rejected by the Minister's office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 75—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to grants and contributions since 2008 at Health Canada, what funding applications were approved by departmental officials but rejected by the Minister's office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 78—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:

With respect to the national crime prevention strategy and the youth gang prevention fund: (a) how much money has been spent on each of these programs in each fiscal year since 2005-2006; and (b) how much money has been spent on advertising for each of these programs in each fiscal year since 2005-2006?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 79—Hon. Denis Coderre:

With respect to the safety management systems (SMS) put in place by airlines since 2005, and following the appearance of the Chair of the Canadian Federal Pilots Association before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on February 21, 2007: (a) how many SMS inspections were carried out by Transport Canada inspectors, and on which airlines; (b) for each inspection carried out by Transport Canada, was the airline in compliance with the security regulations in place at the time of inspection; (c) for each inspection that was completed on an airline that was not in compliance with the regulations, what measures were taken by the airline to ensure that compliance was achieved; (d) did Transport Canada verify Avesos SMS compliance and, if yes, when will its report be concluded; and (e) does Transport Canada intend to review the SMS regulations that airlines are subject to in the near future?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 81—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to the sale of Statistics Canada data and products, how much revenue external to Government of Canada sources did Statistics Canada make in fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 from the sale of products and services, broken down by Census-related and non-Census-related products and services, excluding special surveys?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 82—Hon. Bob Rae:

With regard to the rising costs of the F-35 stealth fighter jets and the fact that United States officials have publicly questioned the progress and efficacy of the F-35s: (a) in what meetings with the United States has the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) or the Department of National Defence (DND) participated at which there were discussions of the increasing cost of the jets from the initial \$9 billion assessment to approximately \$21 billion; (b) in what meetings with the United States has DFAIT or DND participated at which there were discussions about the impact that production delays surrounding the F-35s would have on Canada's timeline to receive the jets and the amount that the jets will cost; and (c) what is the most recent projected cost for Canada's purchase of the F-35 jets?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 84—Mr. Sean Casey:

With respect to staffing at Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC): (a) what is the breakdown, expressed as a percentage of the total number of VAC staff, of VAC staff who work in (i) the departmental headquarters in Ottawa, (ii) the departmental headquarters in Charlottetown, (iii) regional offices across Canada, (iv) sub-regional offices across Canada, (v) district offices across Canada; (b) what are the names and titles of departmental staff at the EX level and above in the Head Office in Ottawa; (c) what is the authorized number of employees on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB); and (d) what is the breakdown of the location of the VRAB members and employees in the various regional and district offices of VAC?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 91—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to oil spill clean-ups in Northern Arctic waters: (a) what dispersants does the government use or have plans to use in this process; (b) what is the quantity of the government's stocks of these dispersants; (c) what tests has the government conducted concerning the use of these dispersants in the clean-up of an Arctic oil spill; (d) what tests has the government conducted concerning the effects of these dispersants on (i) the Arctic environment, (ii) Arctic wildlife; (e) when and by whom were the tests in (c) and (d) conducted; (f) what were the costs of the tests in (c) and (d); (g) does the government have a regimen in place for the ongoing evaluation of dispersants to be used in Arctic spills; (h) how are the dispersants which the government evaluates graded in terms of effectiveness for use in the Arctic; (i) in the event of such an occurrence, does the government have plans to use a dispersant to break up a spill at the source of the leak in Arctic waters; (j) what is the government's assessment of the effectiveness of the use of dispersants at the source of a spill in the clean-up process; and (k) what, if any, tests has the government conducted to develop a strategy for using dispersants to break up spills at the source, and what are the costs for these tests?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 94—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to grants and contributions since 2008 at the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, what funding applications were approved by departmental officials but rejected by the Minister's office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 95—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to grants and contributions since 2008 at Status of Women Canada, what funding applications were approved by departmental officials but rejected by the Minister's office?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 96—Hon. Mark Eyking:

With regard to Canadian International Development Agency funding since 2009, what is the name of every organization that has not had its funding renewed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 98—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to the operating budget freeze at Western Economic Diversification Canada: (a) what measures were taken to limit spending in the last fiscal year; (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition; (c) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off; (d) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired; and (e) what is the projected attrition rate over the next five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 100—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to grants and contributions under \$25,000 granted by Status of Women Canada since January 1, 2008, what are: (a) the names of the recipients; (b) the amounts of the grant or contribution; (c) the dates of the grant or contribution; (d) the dates of length of funding; and (e) the descriptions of the purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 105—Mr. Frank Valeriote:

With regard to the purchase of 65 F-35(A) fighter jets for future use in the Canadian Forces: (a) when and on how many occasions did the Department of National Defence (DND) submit a justification for “the legal authority to use an exception to competitive bidding”, as is required in section 3.15[a] of the Treasury Board Guideline; and (b) for each submission, referenced in the government’s response to part (a) of this question, that utilized the exception to competitive bidding found under section 3.15[a][iv] of the Treasury Board Guidelines, what justification is provided that would allow the government and DND to consider the F-35(A) as the only aircraft capable of meeting all of the department’s high-level mandatory requirements for this procurement project despite the department’s knowledge that the F-35(A) cannot meet the mandatory requirement pertaining to air-to-air refuelling?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 107—Hon. Gerry Byrne:

With regard to the operations and management of Marine Atlantic Incorporated (MAI), what are the details of: (a) MAI’s (i) Corporate Plan 2004-2005 to 2009-2010, (ii) Corporate Plan 2005-2006 to 2010-2011, (iii) Corporate Plan 2006-2007 to 2011-2012, (iv) Corporate Plan 2007-2008 to 2012-2013, (v) Corporate Plan 2008-2009 to 2013-2014, (vi) Corporate Plan 2009-2010 to 2014-2015; (b) each of the respective Corporate Plan Summaries for each Five Year Corporate Plan identified in (a); (c) all Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Directors of MAI held between January 1, 2004, and March 1, 2011; (d) all minutes, records or notes of Corporate Planning Sessions of the Board of Directors of MAI held between January 1, 2004, and March 1, 2011; (e) all President’s Reports submitted to the Board of Directors of MAI between January 1, 2004, and March 1, 2011; (f) all Chief Executive Officer’s (CEO) Reports to the Board of Directors of MAI submitted between January 1, 2004, and March 1, 2011; (g) all reports, minutes of meetings or record of meetings held between either the President, the CEO or the Board of Directors or any Committee of the Board of Directors with either the Minister of State (Transport) or the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities held between January 1, 2004, and March 1, 2011; (h) all reports, minutes of meetings or record of meetings held between either the President, the CEO or the Board of Directors or any Committee of the Board of Directors and either the Deputy Minister of Transport Canada or any Assistant or Associate Deputy Minister of Transport Canada held between January 1, 2004, and March 1, 2011; (i) all draft reports, findings, recommendations and conclusions forwarded to Transport Canada by the two firms, Fleetway Incorporated and Oceanic Consulting Corporation, which were contracted to provide input on various aspects of MAI’s fleet renewal deliberations, as referred to in the President’s Report to the Board of Directors of MAI on September 23, 2005; (j) the final reports, findings, recommendations and conclusions submitted to either MAI or to Transport Canada by each of the two firms, Fleetway Incorporated and Oceanic Consulting Corporation, whom were contracted by either MAI or Transport Canada to provide

input on various aspects of MAI’s fleet renewal; (k) all responses made by MAI to Transport Canada regarding MAI’s position on each of the recommendations arising out of MAI’s Advisory Committee report chaired by Captain Sid Hynes, as was requested of MAI by the Deputy Minister of Transport Canada, along with any replies to these messages from the recipients; (l) all minutes, records and notes of the meeting or meetings held between officials of MAI and representatives of Canadian shipyards regarding MAI’s fleet renewal requirements and bidding opportunities of new vessels; (m) all minutes, records and notes prepared by management officials of MAI providing references to an analysis on the future fleet renewal to either the President of MAI, the CEO of MAI or to the members of the Board of Directors of MAI; (n) all minutes, records and notes including electronic messages prepared by Transport Canada officials for either the Minister of Transportation, Communities and Infrastructure or the Minister of State (Transport) or to members of their respective offices, regarding analysis and discussion of the future fleet renewal recommendations provided by Fleetway Incorporated and by Oceanic Consulting Corporation along with any replies to these messages from the recipients; (o) all minutes, records and notes including electronic messages prepared by Transport Canada to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities or to the Minister of State (Transport) or to members of their respective offices, pertaining to the motion passed by MAI’s Board of Directors that MAI’s fleet replacement program consist of four new vessels along with any replies to these messages from the recipients; (p) all costs incurred to re-position the MV Blue Puttees from MAI facilities to St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, for the unveiling ceremony presided over by the Prime Minister on February 11, 2011; (q) all costs incurred by MAI in the re-position the MV Blue Puttees from MAI facilities to St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, for public display during the Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador (HNL) Annual General Meeting and Convention held between February 24 to 27, 2011; (r) the cost of all public relations, advertising, marketing and promotion planning, preparation, activities and campaigns broken down by event or campaign incurred by or on behalf of MAI between April 1, 2010, and March 1, 2011; (s) any incident reports from events that occurred affecting the MV Blue Puttees while in transit to St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, for the February 11, 2011, unveiling ceremony including the situation of listing of the vessel while enroute and the damage that occurred to both the St. John’s Port Authority docking facilities and to the MV Blue Puttees while docking in St. John’s for that event; and (t) any planned or potential labour force adjustment strategies or requirements within MAI expected or possible in the next three calendar years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 110—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the government’s use of random selection in selecting applicants for jobs in the Public Service: (a) why is this process used over other possible selection processes; and (b) does the government have any plans to eliminate the random selection process in the future?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 111—Mr. Andrew Cash:

With regard to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and promotional items: (a) broken down by fiscal year, since 2006, what was the total amount spent on CMHC branded promotional items; (b) broken down by fiscal year, since 2006, what types of CMHC branded promotional items were purchased by the CMHC; (c) broken down by fiscal year, since 2006, what was the total amount spent on each type of CMHC branded promotional item; (d) broken down by fiscal year, since 2006, what was the total volume purchased of each type of CMHC branded promotional item; and (e) what is the current inventory level of each type of CMHC promotional item?

(Return tabled)

***Question No. 21—Ms. Elizabeth May :**

With regard to the 2010 G8/G20 Summits in Ontario: (a) what was the chain of command relating to security; (b) what Canadian law enforcement and security forces were involved; (c) what international security experts or agencies were involved; and (d) did such agencies recommend kettling people at intersections?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Malpeque, and I will recognize him now.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROCUREMENT CONCERNING CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege on an issue which I believe constitutes a contempt of the House by the government in relation to the publicly stated efforts of the government to undermine the Canadian Wheat Board with the intent to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. Prior to referencing precedents which support this submission, I would provide the following by way of background.

According to the federal government's MERX web site, operated and controlled by Public Works and Government Services Canada, the following notice of proposed procurement was placed on the site on August 11, 2011: Reference Number 225648, entitled "Assessment and Identification of Assets and Financial Contracts of the Canadian Wheat Board". The contracting authority listed is a senior contracting officer with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. According to the notice of description contained on the site, the purpose of the contract is stated as follows:

The purpose of the audit is to provide reasonable assurance of the total financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and the dissolution or winding up of the CWB after the final pooling periods (expected to be July 31, 2012). The final pool period may be conducted as usual under the Act.

The notice of description continues under the audit's objectives:

A. To provide assurance that the financial reporting is up to date and that all financial transactions have been accurately recorded in order to determine the potential financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and the dissolution or winding up of the CWB.

B. To provide assurance that all agreements/contractual and licencing agreements and all marketing plans as well as the security provided for those said plans entered into by the Canadian Wheat Board are all documented and verified in order to determine any potential liabilities and to review all termination clauses. This will also include a review of all documentation with financial implications, such as outstanding legal actions.

The Speaker will note that on at least two occasions in the notice of description, the government has stated clearly and unequivocally that the reason for the audits is based upon "the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and the dissolution or winding up of the CWB".

The contempt arises from the direct reference that the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and dissolution or winding up the Canadian Wheat Board will follow the final pooling periods expected July 31, 2012.

In other words, there is the presumption that the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, a procedure which can only be sanctioned by an act of Parliament, will in fact occur. The

Privilege

government has made no secret of the fact that legislation to repeal the Canadian Wheat Board Act will be introduced this fall. That is its right. What the government has not stated as clearly as does the notice of proposed procurement is that the pith and substance of the act will be the "dissolution or winding up of the CWB".

It is my submission that the posting of this notice of proposed procurement with the wording provided is a contempt of this House on the basis that no legislation has been tabled, let alone passed, upon which such a specific intent can be supported.

I would add to this submission the following.

In the July 28, 2011 issue of the *Western Producer*, an article appeared entitled, "Open market will kill CWB". In the article reference was made to the establishment by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food of a task force, which is "to look at issues that are likely to arise once legislation to end the single desk is passed." The task force is chaired by Agriculture Canada deputy minister John Knubley and consists of representatives of the Canadian Grain Commission, Canadian International Grains Institute, Grain Growers of Canada, Pulse Canada, and the Canola Council of Canada.

• (1530)

On September 6, 2011, my office received from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada the terms of reference of that task force. As the Speaker will note, the opening statement of the terms of reference reads as follows:

The group will take as given that:

— all grains will be removed from the monopoly by August 2012.

I would further note that the reference of the task force provides for the expenditure of public funds of which has yet to be revealed to this House. I quote:

We are targeting up to four meetings in Winnipeg between mid-July and early September, with video/tele conferencing as required. The Department will reimburse invited participants for approved travel expenses.

It is my understanding that the minister was to receive a report from that task force on September 15, 2011.

There is no ambiguity to this statement. Given the specifics contained in the notice of proposed procurement referenced above, the terms of reference of the task force complement the procurement notice and serve to reinforce the contempt I am outlining, namely, that neither the notice of procurement nor the terms of the task force cited are based upon any legitimate action of the House, which is the only body that can authorize a repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and the dissolution or winding up of the CWB.

The government presumes that the act has been repealed, which in fact it has not. It has not been presented; it has not been debated; it has not been amended or in any way pronounced upon by the House or the other body down the corridor.

By way of precedence, I refer the Speaker to the decision of Speaker Fraser on October 10, 1989, at pages 4457 to 4461 of *Debates*, as contained in *Selected Decisions of Speaker John A. Fraser*, pages 3 to 11. The context of the decision was the following:

Privilege

In August 1989, during the summer recess, the Government placed an advertisement in newspapers across the country stating that the proposed new Goods and Services Tax (GST) would come into effect on January 1, 1991. When the session resumed on September 25, 1989, the...Leader of the Opposition raised a question of privilege relating to the said advertisement. He was of the opinion that by placing newspaper advertisements announcing an effective date for the GST, the Government denied the role of Parliament in the imposition of taxes and thereby prejudiced proceedings of the House and its committees.

Speaker Fraser indicated it was not his intent, and rightly so, to rule upon the content of any legislation the government proposed or brought forward to the House, and it is not the intent of this submission either. However, Speaker Fraser did begin by expounding upon the arguments presented by the Liberal leader at the time, and I quote from pages 4 and 5 of *Selected Decisions of Speaker John A. Fraser*:

...first, that the advertisement prejudices the future proceedings of the House and of the Finance Committee...; and second, that the advertisement is a contempt of Parliament because it leads readers to infer that the House has no role in the passage of the tax, thus misleading the Canadian public concerning the procedures employed by Parliament in adopting such legislation.

As to the first point, Speaker Fraser did acknowledge that the House did have before it a technical paper on the subject which was under discussion. This is a fact not in evidence on the matter that I now raise before the House.

The Conservative government of the day, in its defence, presented the following in response. Again, I quote from page 5 of *Selected Decisions of Speaker John A. Fraser*:

[The Minister of Justice] explained that in the budget which was approved by the House, the government had indicated that the Goods and Services Tax would be implemented on January 1, 1991. Finally, since the Committee is presently studying the issue, he suggested that no case can be made for the claim that the Committee's work is being impeded.

• (1535)

Again, Mr. Speaker, neither of the facts referenced by the then minister of justice are in evidence with respect to the matter I now place before you regarding the Canadian Wheat Board. There is no reference to the Canadian Wheat Board in any context in the budget the government tabled on June 6, 2011, nor has a technical paper nor a cost benefit analysis of any kind been presented to the House.

Finally, neither is the agriculture committee nor any other committee of the House examining in any respect the issue of the Canadian Wheat Board.

However, the government has stated in its notice of proposed procurement a specific date as to when the functioning of the Canadian Wheat Board's pooling system, as currently provided for by an act of Parliament, will cease, that being July 31, 2012.

Speaker Fraser went to considerable length to provide clarification as to what constitutes a contempt. In this regard he cited Speaker Sauvé of October 29, 1980 at page 4214 of *Hansard*. Rather than take time to quote at length those remarks, I would refer to the *Selected Decisions of Speaker John A. Fraser* on pages 6 and 7. Speaker Fraser was quite clear and this point is key to the argument I present today. I must quote from page 10 of *Selected Decisions of Speaker John A. Fraser*:

However, I want the House to understand very clearly that if your Speaker ever has to consider a situation like this again, the Chair will not be as generous. This is a case which, in my opinion, should never occur. I expect the Department of Finance and other departments to study this ruling carefully and remind everyone within the

Public Service that we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.

Speaker Fraser concluded by stating:

This advertisement may not be a contempt of the House in the narrow confines of procedural definition, but it is, in my opinion, ill-conceived and does a great disservice to the great traditions of this place.... [T]his ad is objectionable and should never be repeated.

He went on to say:

[I]f ever this issue has to be debated and considered by this House again these comments will serve to guide the House in its deliberations.

I want to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, because it is important to your decision:

[I]f ever this issue has to be debated and considered by this House again these comments will serve to guide the House in its deliberations.

I would add to the preceding the following from a decision by Speaker Parent, found at pages 8987 to 8988 of *Debates* March 13, 1997 and referenced in *Selected Decisions of Speaker Parent* on pages 7 and 8 wherein Speaker Parent, in reference to a matter related to government advertising in the public domain prior to final passage of legislation stated:

[W]here the government issues communications to the public containing allusions to measures before the House, it would be advisable to choose words and terms that leave no doubt as to the disposition of these measures.

Those whose duty it is to approve the wording of communications to the public for a Minister must surely be aware that the terms used in parliamentary language have a very specific meaning. Trying to avoid them or to use them for advertising purposes shows a lack of consideration for the institution of Parliament and the role of the Members in the legislative process.

What should be taken note of is the fact that the Conservative government of the day, in respecting the admonition of the Speaker, withdrew from circulation brochures referencing the implementation of the goods and services tax at that time.

• (1540)

In responding to a question of privilege concerning the distribution of brochures related to the implementation of the GST, on December 18, 1989, at page 12 of the *Selected Decisions of Speaker John A. Fraser*, he stated:

...subsequent to the Chair's ruling on the advertisements for the GST, steps had been taken to have all offending materials returned to the Department.

I refer as well to a ruling by Speaker Milliken on the issue of privilege again related to government advertising found at pages 6276 and 6278 of *Debates*, May 29, 2008. In his decision, Speaker Milliken stated that the advertising in question at the time contained caveats which demonstrated that there was no "misrepresentation of the proceedings of the House or of any presumption of the outcome of its deliberations".

He also stated:

It is with these precedents in mind that I reviewed the advertisements in question. They contain phrases such as "the Government of Canada is proposing measures", "These important measures, once in effect," and "These measures are currently before Parliament". In my view, the advertisements clearly acknowledge that these measures are not yet in place.

Even a cursory examination of the text of the advertisement placed on the government MERX website on August 11 of this year fails to meet the test of clarity referred to by Speaker Milliken in his decision of May 29, 2008 referenced above.

I would also point to a statement of the government House leader on May 15, 2008, on page 5922 of *Debates*, during a debate on a question of privilege related to government advertisements wherein he stated:

...that advertising undertaken by the government should not presume or suggest that a decision had been made already when it had not been taken by the House of Commons or by Parliament.

Obviously, the government's actions with the MERX ad and the actions of spokesmen in western Canada are clearly operating on the assumption that the Canadian Wheat Board Act is gone as of next year. Legislation has not even been introduced in the House.

At page 85 of the second edition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it states:

By far, most of the cases of privilege raised in the House relate to matters of contempt challenging the perceived authority and dignity of Parliament and its Members.

In that regard, I would remind the House of the decision of Speaker Milliken on March 19, 2001, at pages 1839 to 1840 of *Debates*. With respect to a matter of the failure of the government to provide a legislative briefing to members, the Speaker stated:

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media—

Or in the case before the House today, the public and potential contractors:

...that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

In respect to the matter I have presented today, it is my submission that the government has failed to heed the advice and admonishments of the government House leader himself or of previous Speakers on this matter.

Just before I close, to add a little context I would also add this one final point with respect to the actions of the government in this matter.

Section 47(1) of the Canadian Wheat Board Act is very germane to the argument presented today, which in part states:

The Minister shall not cause to be introduced in Parliament a bill that would exclude any kind, type, class or grade of wheat or barley, or wheat or barley produced in any area in Canada, from the provisions of Part IV, either in whole or in part, or generally, or for any period, or that would extend the application of Part III or Part IV or both Parts III and IV to any other grain, unless

- a. the Minister has consulted with the board about the exclusion or extension; and
- b. the producers of the grain have voted in favour of the exclusion or extension, the voting process having been determined by the Minister.

• (1545)

It is my submission that the announcement that the government is seeking audit advice on the process of “dissolution or winding up of the CWB”, which will be under way by July 31, 2012, constitutes a breach of the act as it currently stands.

As far as I am aware, the government has not consulted with the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board on any bill presented to Parliament and the minister has not called for any plebiscite of producers in respect to that legislation. In fact, the Canadian Wheat Board held a plebiscite in which 62% said they do not want the minister to touch the bill.

Privilege

To summarize, the case of contempt I present here is different from that raised on October 8, 1989, in the following aspects.

First, the notice to propose procurement is clear in that it is proposing to let a contract for audits of the Canadian Wheat Board, based upon the stated fact of “dissolution or winding up of the CWB after the final pooling periods (expected to be July 31, 2012)”.

Second, unlike the 1989 case referred to, the government has not even attempted to provide this House or any committee of this House with any kind of technical paper or any indication that it has done due diligence and completed its own economic impact assessment on any proposed changes to the Canadian Wheat Board, let alone “dissolution or winding up”.

Given the admonition of Speaker Fraser, it is my submission that the case he warned against reappearing has now arisen and one with even less legitimacy than that of the one he decided upon in October 1989. As a consequence, it is my submission that the text of the notice of proposed procurement and the terms of reference of the task force established by the Minister of Agriculture would leave the reader to conclude that the Canadian Wheat Board will be repealed, even though no such legislation in any form has been tabled in this House, and that in less than a year the Canadian Wheat Board will be in the process of dissolution and winding up, two facts which will negatively impact upon the board, those farmers operating under it and those doing business with that board.

My privilege, as well as that of all members of the House, has been affected by the fact that the public has been placed in a position to conclude that Parliament has acted on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board on the basis of a notice of procurement when in fact it has not.

Therefore, I would seek from the Speaker a finding of contempt and I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1550)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point. I will try to be far more concise than my colleague from Malpeque.

Let me state at the outset that there is clearly no case of privilege here. There is no contempt that is being sought by the member for Malpeque. The hon. member went to great lengths to try to compare a situation that occurred with public advertising in 1989 regarding the GST with the situation we have before us now where there was a notice of procurement not made in general terms to the general public but specifically to a company called MERX.

Mr. Speaker, that is critical in your determinations, because we have always stated our intentions to make fundamental organizational changes to the Canadian Wheat Board. We have campaigned for four successive elections on that. The last election concluded in May of this year was no different.

Privilege

Therefore, there is no question that the general public, producers across western Canada, and anyone else for that matter knows the intentions of our government. We have not introduced legislation yet giving any details of that. When and if that legislation is introduced, we have not stated in any unequivocal or definitive way that there would be a date for the conclusion of that legislation.

The member for Malpeque is clearly trying to draw a very long bow by taking a request for procurement with an end date to the company that may want to submit a tender and stating that clearly since there was a date contained in the ad of request for procurement that must be the date that the government feels this legislation will have been concluded. That is a very long bow to draw and is simply incorrect. There is no definitive statement that the Government of Canada has put out any public advertisements stating that by a certain date in the future the Canadian Wheat Board legislation will have passed. We have not even introduced the legislation so there can be no contempt.

The member for Malpeque is on his tirade once more trying to suggest that Canadian producers in western Canada will be somehow aggrieved by changes to the Canadian Wheat Board. We take a different view. We have stated that many times quite publicly.

In this particular question of privilege that the member raises, there is no question of contempt whatsoever because nowhere has there been any public advertising presented by the Government of Canada giving an end date to legislation that has not even been introduced. The advertisement the member is referring to is merely a request for procurement which provides a date for those companies that are interested to submit their tenders to the government. That is all. It does not state that the government intends to have legislation passed by any specific date. In fact, there has been no indication in a public venue or any public advertisement whatsoever that the government plans to even introduce legislation and at what date.

I know the member opposes the government's plan to give marketing freedom to Canadian western producers, but we will do so. We will introduce legislation that will be debated in the House. All members of this place as well as members of the agriculture committee will have a chance to examine and to speak to the legislation when and if it is introduced. However, it has not been introduced and there is no contempt.

In conclusion, I would suggest to my friend from Malpeque that while he has differing views from the government on the rights of Canadian farmers to market their grain as they see fit there is no contempt in this case.

However, as I am sure my friend from Malpeque wishes to engage in further debate on this, I ask that we be allowed to reserve the right to comment further if needed in the near future.

• (1555)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like the opportunity to intervene first on the point of privilege raised by my colleague from Malpeque and also provide some comments on the intervention by the parliamentary secretary.

I would start by saying that the parliamentary secretary stood and very categorically announced that there is no breach of parliamentary privilege or contempt here. I only raise this point to put to you, Mr.

Speaker, that it is not for him to make that determination, but for you as the Speaker of the House to determine whether my colleague from Malpeque has a legitimate point of privilege and whether a finding of contempt may in fact stem from it.

Addressing my colleague's point, we took note as well that the request for proposals on the MERX website that took place in August very clearly stated a wish for help in evaluating and auditing the wrap-up costs associated with terminating the Canadian Wheat Board's single desk monopoly by July 31, 2012. In other words, the Canadian Wheat Board as we know it would cease to exist on August 1, 2012. I agree with him and ask you, Mr. Speaker, given that Speakers are bound by jurisprudence and precedent, to take note of the precedents that he cited, not from one Speaker but three separate Speakers, that such an announcement can presuppose, undermine and prejudice the parliamentary procedure that necessarily determines legislation and would be able to result in the final abolishing of the Canadian Wheat Board.

I would point out that it is not only the collective privilege of members of Parliament that is being impacted by this presupposition, this announcement for all the world to see, that the Wheat Board is finished, over and dead. It is not only those of us in the chamber who are impacted, but the rural Prairie economy is also affected by such an announcement. If this announcement gazetted on the MERX website was so benign and innocuous, as the parliamentary secretary would have us believe, why do we see the spike in the share prices of the very grain companies that will benefit by assuming the very lucrative market share left behind by the \$6 billion a year corporation that the government is so hell-bent and determined to dismantle? If this announcement was so innocuous, why are the share prices going up in these companies in anticipation of what the government has very publicly announced?

We should take note that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the minister who is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and who should by all rights be the Wheat Board's greatest champion, not its worst enemy and saboteur, has visited the offices of the Canadian Wheat Board only one time, and for 20 minutes, although some argue it was 22 minutes. He was being timed.

We just learned this from the CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board during our meetings in Quebec City not three days ago. It was announced to us that the one and only time the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food responsible for the Wheat Board has ever visited the Canadian Wheat Board was to announce to it this summer that on July 31 it will cease to exist and that on August 1, 2012, there will be no more single desk monopoly for marketing grain through the Canadian Wheat Board.

That is a public declaration. That is an announcement. That is not even giving us the right to entertain first reading, second reading, committee stage, third reading and report stage of a piece of legislation before the government has decreed by its advertising in MERX and by its public declaration to the directors of the Canadian Wheat Board that they are finished. That does undermine, sabotage and strip away my privilege as a parliamentarian to effect change to that legislation.

It may be that the government will not get its legislation through. It may well be that it becomes amended or modified or ameliorated, or that some of the worst aspects of it do not succeed, even though it has a majority.

• (1600)

We know that for the government to meet that July 31 deadline, that legislation has to clear the Senate by December 15. The members on this side will not allow that to happen. We will use every parliamentary procedure possible to ensure that the government does not get legislation passed, if we cannot amend it to modify it.

That means the government will be undermining the Prairie economy, destabilizing the key industry in our agricultural sector, throwing confusion and chaos into the marketing of grain and grain exports. Grain to Manitoba is what oil is to the province of Alberta. The government cannot be so cavalier and reckless.

The government intends to dismantle the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world by July 31, 2012, and it does not even know what it will cost. It is only starting to ask now for some help in auditing the impact. Never mind the fact that the government has not done a cost benefit analysis. It has not even done an initial adjudication as to what this might cost.

The figures from the Canadian Wheat Board directors are loosely \$500 million in wrap-up costs. A \$6 billion a year corporation cannot be wrapped up without some closing costs, not when the government has just contracted to buy new ships for the Great Lakes, not when it has producer cars, not when it has standing contracts that it will have to break.

I would add my voice to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take note of the rulings as set out by my colleague, the hon. member for Malpeque, and to take into consideration that the unilateral and arbitrary declaration by the government that the Wheat Board is over is deleterious to my privilege as a member of Parliament, deleterious to the Prairie economy and deleterious to the Prairie farm producers who count on the Wheat Board to provide the best return for their grain sales.

Speakers are guided by precedent and jurisprudence and there is an abundance of jurisprudence that supports the point that my colleague raises, that we are being denied that most fundamental right and privilege of all members of Parliament, and that is to determine the outcome of legislation and not have it presupposed by a government that has very little respect for Parliament.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief and stick to the principle of process, about which I believe all of us need to be concerned.

My colleague made reference to citations through Speaker Fraser and talked about how important it was that we respect the institution that we belong to and that we participate fully. We have to be very careful of the dangerous slope that we are going into.

When governments or departments make a mistake, there is a great deal of honour in coming forward and saying that they made a mistake and that they will ensure it is not going to happen again.

Privilege

I would love to see a government minister, the acting House leader, whomever from the government benches, recognize that Speaker Fraser in his comments, which have been referenced in addressing this motion, are in fact applicable for today's motion.

It is indeed critically important that when a minister's office or the government takes an action in anticipation that a bill is ultimately going to be coming through the House of Commons and passed, that is in fact wrong. The process of the House of Commons has to be allowed to do the things that it needs to do in order to ensure that we operate from within the law.

I would ultimately argue that government should not be presuming how the House of Commons will vote on any given issue.

I know from personal experience back in 1986 everyone believed that the Manitoba budget would pass because it had a majority government. No government advertising was entered into prior to the budget that was supposed to pass. The government advertising for the budget always occurs post-passage or post-introduction of the budget itself. In 1986 that budget did not pass even though there was a majority government.

My suggestion is to put the emphasis on the process. We need to be looking at that. I believe my colleague highlighted Speaker Fraser in his remarks to ensure the integrity of the House of Commons is maintained. I would suggest that, at the very least, the right thing would be for the minister responsible to stand in his place, recognize that a mistake has been made, state that he will go out of his way to ensure that it does not occur again and that the problem currently in place is fixed.

• (1605)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I know you will be making your decision available to all of us in the very near future. I would reiterate just one or two points that I made in my first intervention.

Both members from the third party and the member from the official opposition seemed to suggest that the RFP that was put on the MERX web site categorically gave a deadline for alterations to the Canadian Wheat Board, in other words for legislation to be concluded. That is not the case. It was merely a request for MERX to supply a proposal to our government and gave a deadline for when we wish that proposal to be in our hands. It did not refer to the legislation itself. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the legislation has not yet been introduced. There will be ample opportunities for debate on that piece of legislation when and if it is introduced in this House.

However, our intentions have always been clear, so to suggest, as my hon. colleague from the official opposition mentioned, that we are somehow undermining the ability of parliamentarians or destroying or undermining the economy of Canadian western grain producers, is absolutely false. Canadian western producers have known for years the intentions of our government and they have overwhelmingly voted in rural ridings across western Canada for a Conservative majority government, which they now have.

Government Orders

To my colleague from Winnipeg Centre who says that any changes to the Canadian Wheat Board as advocated by our government may destroy the agricultural economy, I would point out two illustrations. One is of a producer who contacted me in my riding and said two years ago that his farming operation lost \$250,000 because he could not market his barley to the highest bidder. He was forced to sell his barley through the Canadian Wheat Board and it cost his farming operation \$250,000. I would like the member for Malpeque or any other member to stand in this place and please respond to that producer as to why the Canadian Wheat Board was a good deal for him.

In response to questions about the agricultural economy, the Minister of Agriculture pointed out today quite correctly that one of the benefits of having a voluntary wheat board is the positive impact it would have on value-added industries actually starting up their businesses in Canada. Right now because of the Wheat Board, pasta plants, value-added plants and industries like that are not allowed in Canada. They have to find their place of business to be set up otherwise. There are four or five of those examples south of the border. They do not fundamentally understand what the Wheat Board means in terms of restrictions to agricultural industry. That is fine. We can have that debate. We hope to be able to educate them when legislation is introduced, if it is introduced.

In conclusion, to suggest that because of a request for proposal to an industry on a web site, that it be the end date of the legislation we have yet to introduce is sheer folly. It absolutely makes no sense. In my view, there is no basis for privilege. There is certainly no basis for contempt.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you give a response to this very important question at your earliest opportunity.

● (1610)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the deputy House leader is absolutely wrong in his remarks and I will make two points to prove so.

The deputy leader talked about the contract with MERX. The advertisement tells the contractor, whoever it might be, and, through that advertisement, the public, that it must assume that the Canadian Wheat Board ceases to exist. That is the assumption that is made when in fact that can only be done through legislation in the House. We are not operating in a dictatorship where the executive branch of government decides all. The deputy House leader is absolutely wrong on that point.

Second, I will refer members back to my remarks. I indicated in my remarks that the Minister of Agriculture set up a task force. On September 6 of this year, my office received from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada the terms of reference of that task force. The very first term of reference reads:

This group will take as given that:

all grains will be removed from the monopoly by August 2012.

I will quote it again for the deputy House leader. The group, the task force, appointed and paid for by the Government of Canada, will take “as a given that: all grains will be removed from the monopoly by August 2012”. That is clearly operating on presumption. Legislation has not even been entered into but it will be gone. A

task force has even been set up. We need to keep in mind that the task force was basically secret. Public meetings were not called for farmers to be heard. It was just an internal, little select body chaired by the deputy minister of agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think you have any choice but to rule contempt of the privileges of the House on the actions of the Government of Canada in this particular matter.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their submissions. I can assure them that I will take this issue under advisement and come back to the House in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister of Immigration provided his comments on this particular bill and I do have questions that I want to pose to him. The tradition in the chamber has been to allow opposition members to question a minister on legislation right after he or she has spoken. The Minister of Immigration has spoken and I do have questions. When will I get the opportunity to pose the questions to the minister?

The Speaker: Unfortunately, since the minister is not available to be here for the question and comment portion of his speech, the tradition of the House is to move on to the next speaker. I will give the floor now to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-4, first, because of its severe impact on legitimate refugees who come to Canada; second, because of its direct conflict with Canada's international obligations; and third, because it takes Canada once again down the wrong-headed road of trying to use incarceration as a solution for social problems.

Looking at the title, Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act, one might wonder why anyone would be concerned. We all share a common concern about the financial exploitation of desperate refugees. We all share concerns about the unsafe transportation of refugees to Canada. However, the title of the act is clearly more about spin than about information. It is designed to provoke a, “well who could disagree with that”, kind of response. Unfortunately, it is something we have seen all too often on Conservative bills.

Early in the debate, the parliamentary secretary for immigration said that Canadians clearly voted for this measure. In fact, if they had read the title and if this were a vote determining measure, then it was certainly with the expectation that this bill would contain significant measures targeting human smugglers.

Government Orders

However, when we actually look at the bill, what do we find? We find only two significant measures targeting those smugglers. These two measures might perhaps be helpful. One makes the endangerment of life and safety for those being transported an aggravating factor when it comes to sentencing. This is something for which we might find support from all sides of the House.

Second, there is a measure that would extend the time for initiating proceedings against smugglers from six months to five years. As we all know, human smuggling cases can be quite complicated. Again, this is a measure that might find a degree of support from all sides of the House and might pass quickly.

The other measures directed at smugglers are of questionable use. They once again stem from the Conservative's approach of trying to deter crime through mandatory minimum sentences and large fines even though all the literature in all kinds of criminal activity and behaviour show that these do not serve as deterrents. I think the problem for the government was that there was not much to do in the area of targeting human smugglers because the maximum penalties are already life in prison and up to \$1 million in fines.

Why the dramatic title? Unfortunately, the government either believes in its own rhetoric, which is based on fear, or the government is attempting simply to enhance its tough guy image at the expense of legitimate refugees.

How large is this problem? Of the 30,000 refugee claimants who might arrive in any given year, less than 2% are estimated to have arrived at the hands of smugglers or in the famous cases of the two ships that came. That is less than 2% or 300-500 people out of more than 33,000 claimants. We are taking a sledge hammer to what is a very real but very small problem.

Still, if we were under siege by human smugglers, there are solutions that would quickly address this problem without draconian attacks on refugee rights and without incurring enormous long-term costs of incarceration. These are quite simple. They are enhanced enforcement and the expeditious determination of refugee claims. Both of those measures require annual adequate funding to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and to law enforcement agencies. However, when we have a government that is now obsessed with cuts to public agencies, we cannot expect them to be able to do the enforcement work and do the determinations of refugee claims in an expeditious manner, which would actually take away the problem of smugglers and abuse of the system.

I will outline the main content of the bill because it is this content that gives rise to my concern. It is this content that I do not really understand. Bill C-4 is an attack on legitimate refugees who happen to arrive in a different manner than other refugees. I find the following seven things to be major concerns.

Bill C-4 creates a discriminatory category of designated refugee claimants based on their mode of arrival. It would impose penalties and disadvantages on legitimate refugees who have been forced to use the services of human smugglers to escape with their lives. It would impose penalties and disadvantages that would not be placed on other legitimate refugees who happen to arrive under their own steam, by air or crossing land boundaries.

●(1615)

Second, it provides for the detention of legitimate refugee claimants for up to one year with no review, including children. These are people who have perhaps suffered violence themselves, who have perhaps lost members of their family, who have certainly lost almost everything they had to their name. What will we do in Canada? We will further punish them by keeping them in detention for up to one year with no review.

Third, Bill C-4 proposes a ban on humanitarian and compassionate applications for five years. This would arbitrarily deny a right to those who have already been victims twice over. They were victims in their home country and victims of human smugglers. Now, in Canada, we would deny them a right to make their case on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, which all others have the right to do in this country.

The fourth thing of concern for me in Bill C-4 is that it would suspend the right to apply for permanent residency for five years. I cannot imagine what we think we would accomplish by doing this. It can only delay family reunification cases where families have been split up abroad and it can only delay the integration of refugees into Canadian society.

My fifth concern is that it would deny refugees travel documents that they would otherwise be entitled to if they were designated claimants. Once again, I cannot imagine what the problem is we are solving here, but the problem we are creating, once again, is with families who may have been separated abroad and who may need these travel documents to travel to help reunify their families.

My sixth concern is that it would allow the retroactive designation of claimants as possibly coming under this act. It is a fundamental principle of British common law which we use that we do not apply retroactive measures in criminal law. To me, the same thing should apply in the case of immigration law dealing with refugee claimants.

Finally and perhaps most egregious, Bill C-4 would exclude designated claimants from the appeal process, something which I believe the Supreme Court would find very hard to uphold in the long run.

Before I say a little more about my specific concerns, I want to talk a little about my own experience with refugees. As some in the House will know, I am the co-founder of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society. It is a society that was set up in the 1980s to employ refugees and immigrants to help other refugees and immigrants with their settlement services in the community of Victoria. I am very proud of my long association with the Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society and the very high quality of work it has done in my community.

Government Orders

In the 1980s, I worked with Latin American refugees who came from Central America. Many of them stayed in my home as their first base of arrival in Canada. I visited refugee camps in both Indonesia and Afghanistan and helped on international projects trying to get the safe return home of refugees. First and foremost, I can tell the House that refugees are looking for a safe place for their families. They are not examining the comparative refugee regulations in countries around the world. They are simply looking for a place to go where they can be safe.

I will tell you a short story about the Campos family who came from El Salvador in the mid 1980s. They had two sons. One of their sons was taken from their house and shot in the street by security forces. They left that night without any documents, taking their younger son and fleeing the country. They ended up at my house in Victoria. I do not know how they got there but I have some suspicions that it was not an altogether pleasant journey, and they may have used the services of human smugglers. They felt they had no choice but to try and save the life of their only surviving son. The Campos family, Arnaldo, Virginia and José are still friends of mine today and they are alive because we gave them refuge in Canada. They did not shop for a place to go. They fled for their lives.

In the late 1980s, I served as an expert witness at refugee board hearings on behalf of Indo-Fijians who fled the military coup in Fiji, as I was working at that time for an international non-government organization. Again, when the Canadian minister of foreign affairs at the time, Joe Clark, said that we would accept refugees from the coups, there was great surprise in Canada when tens of thousands of Indo-Fijians got on the next plane and arrived in Vancouver. If we had had this kind of bill in place, those who had organized the flights would have been defined as human smugglers. Those who raised money to help them come to Canada would have been caught in the web of this bill. These are very productive and proud Canadians today, still living and working in Vancouver.

• (1620)

When we ask about the definition of human smuggling, I should add that as my eighth concern. I feel the definition is so broad that we will inadvertently catch those who are helping legitimate refugees out of humanitarian concerns in the web of the bill. I bought tickets for people to come illegally into Canada in the 1980s who were fleeing for their lives. Would I have been defined as a human smuggler? I am afraid under the bill I might have been.

Earlier in this debate the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism used a bizarre market analogy about trying to affect the price charged by human smugglers. This is nothing out of the real world of refugees who are living in camps day-to-day, trying to find a way to reach safety.

On the other side, we heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration talk about queue-jumping, which implies that there is some kind of organized system for dealing with refugees around the world. This is a system that does not exist and cannot exist when people are fleeing for their lives. Again, there are undoubtedly a few who will attempt to exploit our refugee determination system. The solution for those few is enforcement and swift refugee determinations. This will eliminate the problem of those smugglers who try to target Canada.

My concerns are with legitimate refugees, people who have lost everything, people who have been victims of violence. My concern is how we will treat them when they arrive in Canada. If they arrive by boat, will we deny them the same treatment as other legitimate refugees? The discriminatory category of designated claimants is a clear violation of charter rights and I think the courts, again, would find it hard to uphold such a measure.

The provision of detention without review has already been ruled unconstitutional by the Canadian Supreme Court when dealing with security certificates. Plus we have a provision that says mandatory conditions will be placed on designated claimants who are released and those will be set by regulation. Again, I doubt the Supreme Court of Canada would uphold any such vague determination of conditions for release of detainees.

The bar on humanitarian and compassionate applications for five years and the suspension of the right to apply for permanent residence for five years clearly violate both our obligations under the international convention on refugees and also under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention requires that in all cases the best interests of the child be taken into consideration and I cannot see how that can be met with bans on humanitarian and compassionate applications and with suspensions on the right to apply for permanent residence, which would allow the reunification of families.

I would like to ask the House to listen to the voice of refugees and to those who have actually worked with refugees in the field. Listen to those like the Canadian Council for Refugees that have called for the abandonment of this draconian legislation. Listen to Amnesty International that works every day with those who live in fear of their lives and often tries to help them find safe places to go. Listen to the Canadian Bar Association and its severe reservations about the legislation. Listen to the many other community organizations that work trying to help those who have suffered severe traumas to integrate into Canadian society.

Listen to those voices when it comes time to vote on the bill. Can it be amended? Can it be fixed? My concerns are very severe and I have seen no inclination on the government side to listen to these arguments about humanitarianism, compassion, human rights and treating fairly those who have already been victimized by becoming refugees from their country and by having to resort to the service of human smugglers.

I know many of these people and I know many other members of the House know those who have come to Canada as refugees. The bill would have made that much more difficult for many people who are an important part of our communities now. Let us not deny ourselves the future potential of those people who choose not to come here, but make a wonderful addition to our society.

•(1625)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before questions and comments, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Poverty; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Seniors; the hon. member for Windsor West, Canada-U.S. Border.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words of the hon. member and thoughtful reflection on issues involving not only our immigration system but those of refugee claimants and the treatment of refugee claimants in very particular dire circumstances. It has captured the House for some time.

The rule of law is an essential component of our society. The rule of law is something that the House, this Parliament, needs to ascribe to and needs to hold as its witness. However, the rule of law as stated within this bill is twofold. The rule of law states that not only is the government prescribing a certain method dealing with refugees, a particular variety of refugees, but what is not stated within the bill is that there is a right to due process. That right to due process allows for a consideration of appeal. No single decision can be taken without review. No government can impose a standard without having it adjudicated for its fairness.

Within the context of this legislation, does the hon. member feel this bill and the prevention of any right to review for certain claimants would be constitutional and be upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada?

•(1630)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I think there are very clear examples, in particular, Supreme Court cases involving security certificates, where the Supreme Court has upheld the right to due process. I would like to stress that in none of the cases we are talking about of refugee claimants, even those who came on the boats, have we found anyone who is a threat to Canadian security at this time. Therefore, even in those more severe cases that did involve questions of national security the Supreme Court would not uphold taking away the rights to due process.

As well, in the 1985 Singh case, the Supreme Court very clearly said that refugees could not be denied due process rights because of their new status in Canada.

Therefore, I do not believe that many parts of the bill would stand up to a court challenge.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to listen to his debate and I found it interesting. I have one community in my riding, Brooks, Alberta, which is probably one of the most diverse communities around. There are some 110 languages spoken. There are people from probably any five countries and some of these have been refugees. They have told me that we are on the right track. They have said that people who come here, like those who came on the *Sun Sea*, should not be able to jump the queue, that they should not be able to take advantage of our good Canadian hospitality, particularly with all of the funding that they get for health care and everything else.

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From my point of view, from my constituents who have been refugees and who are supporting us, why is the NDP not supporting us in this position?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, in this case the government has been part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In seeking to dramatize the ship arrivals and in seeking to increase fears, it has caused many Canadians to turn away from the generosity with which they have normally received immigrants and refugees in our country.

I believe when Canadians are asked to look at the real facts, the very small numbers involved and the very real situation of human rights abuse they were fleeing in Sri Lanka, then the boats from Sri Lanka no longer look like such a horrible queue-jumping problem. They look like people who were doing exactly what refugees do, and that is fleeing for their lives and fleeing to a place of safety.

I believe Canadians are generous-hearted and understand that refugees need to be welcomed here when they have no other place to go.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the comments of the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca were very cogent and thoughtful. I enjoy having him as part of my caucus.

The member spoke of the issue, as a number of my colleagues have, about concerns on how the proposed legislation strays from already binding commitments by this nation to international law.

First, there seems to be a pattern under the current government to move away from international obligations commitments. There was a comment earlier today from the other side about why the UN did not do the job. Part of the actions with the UN is stepping up to the plate and signing and ratifying international conventions. When we sign and ratify, we are committing that we will abide by those. Could the member speak to that?

The second issue is that this is the second step taken in substantially altering our immigration and refugee system long policy in Canada. The first measure was to massively open the doors to serve certain sectors and bring in tens of thousands of temporary foreign workers and then say that if they came in as a temporary foreign worker, they should not bother applying for their permanent citizenship or bring their families to contribute to society in the long term.

Could the member speak to those issues and the implications of this proposed law?

•(1635)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, when people point the finger at who should be responsible, I like to point this out. Who takes responsibility for dealing with refugees? Yes, the UN does for some international refugees, but it does this on the basis of voluntary contributions by nations, so there is only so much it can do.

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Far more of the work of trying to care for refugees falls to the international non-governmental organizations and humanitarian organizations that, through donors, out of the generosity of their hearts, help finance the attempts to make refugees safe. I worked for two of those international non-governmental organizations in trying to get refugees safely back to their homes.

It is easy for governments to point the finger at each other, but what we see is ordinary people around the world stepping up and recognizing the problem that refugees have and stepping up to the plate to help them out in those dire times.

As to the other questions, the turning away from our international commitments, the government cannot simply ignore those. They are a part of Canadian law. We have committed ourselves to them and I believe that, again, should this legislation pass in its present form, those commitments will be tested in the courts. As well, they will be tested in the court of world opinion, where Canada's reputation is on the line for being one that not only encourages others to adhere to international law and covenants and their responsibilities, but sets an example in doing so.

It is a very negative trend if we turn away from those obligations. How then can we call on other nations to uphold their obligations when have done so?

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those who come to Canada illegally should expect to be subject to our laws. I believe the bill sends a strong message to those looking to circumvent the immigration system that this will not be tolerated.

The NDP has said that the bill needlessly violates the rights of illegal immigrants by detaining them in order to determine their identity. Does it maintain that we should allow illegal immigrants to roam free without consequence and without knowing whether they are a threat to public safety?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the member's question in particular shines a light on the problem on the other side of the House.

The member has done two things in the phrasing of his question, which I think illustrates the problems with the bill. One is that he has switched from talking about refugees to immigrants. The problem with refugees is that they are not choosing to go anywhere. They are not immigrants. They are refugees.

Second, the member refers to them as illegal entrants, but under the international conventions on refugees, they are not illegal entrants. They have the right to enter Canada and seek refuge here under international agreements which we have signed and ratified.

They may enter illegally if they were immigrants and, as I said, we should use enforcement and quick determination to remove those people who try to use the refugee system as a way around the immigration system. I totally agree with the member on that.

The problem is that if he switches his discussion to refugees, then they have legal status. They have the right to seek that refuge in Canada and we have the responsibility to treat them fairly.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of thoughts to share with members regarding this particular bill. I will give a bit of an overview.

We look at Canada as a great country that has all sorts of hope and opportunity and that is fairly well established around the world. Today, we have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 0.8% in terms of our overall immigrant population, which is roughly 260,000-plus immigrants every year, and a portion of those immigrants come to Canada as refugees. We had higher percentages during the 1990s when more immigrants came to our country on a per capita basis. However, all in all, Canada has provided opportunity and hope for citizens from around the world to come here and call Canada their new home.

"Refugees" is not a bad word. The government has done a disservice to refugees as a whole because of the way it is branding refugees as being dirty and not really contributing to the Canadian economy. That is what Canadians are picking up on because of the manner in which the government continues to talk about refugees.

What is even worse is that we often hear people use "refugee" and "immigrant" as one and the same. I can say that there is a great deal of concern with regard to trying to fix the system we have, but, all in all, the vast majority of Canadians are quite happy with the contributions of immigration policies from the past that have seen a good balance of immigrants and refugees come to our country.

Dealing with Bill C-4 and why it exists today causes a great deal of concern for many stakeholders who have worked with refugees over the years. I have had opportunities to have discussions with a number of refugees over the years. I believe I have an excellent appreciation of what it is that many refugees have to go through in order to arrive in Canada, ultimately settle and become contributing members of our society. We sell refugees short when we do not better educate the population as a whole in terms of the valuable contributions that refugees make to our nation. Instead, I have found that the government has made the decision to try to come across as talking tough on the crime and safety elements. It has kind of roped in the whole refugee aspect of it, which is most unfortunate.

There are ads that say that the Prime Minister has a plan to crack down on human smugglers and bogus claimants. There is an interesting picture, to which I have made reference, showing the Prime Minister and, what appears to be, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism standing on the back of the *Ocean Lady*. Members will be familiar with the *Ocean Lady*, the vessel that had 76 refugees on board.

It is interesting that the government seems to be determined to make refugees look as if they are bad. When we look at the number of refugees who have come in via boats, it is a small percentage of the overall number of immigrants, let alone the number of refugees that come to Canada. To try to put everyone in the same group and demonize refugees is just wrong.

I do not believe this is good legislation. I believe it establishes a second tier of refugee that is not healthy, that promotes and encourages some of the negative thinking and attitudes toward refugees that is out there. I believe the government has a role to encourage more tolerance and better education regarding issues surrounding refugees and so forth.

• (1640)

I was hoping to ask a couple of questions earlier when the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism spoke to Bill C-4. Usually members are afforded the opportunity to ask questions. However, the one question I was hoping to get an answer to concerns the boat on which he was standing side-by-side with the Prime Minister, the *Ocean Lady*. There were 76 individuals who claimed to be refugees. How many of those individuals are, in fact, settled today? It would have been wonderful to have heard a response from the minister. My understanding is that all of them had qualified for asylum here in Canada. That was a photo-op that the government used to tell Canadians that refugees are bad.

The feedback I get from the average person, because of the way in which the government has persistently attempted to make refugees look bad, is starting to have an impact, and it is not a pleasant impact. There is a percentage of Canadians who have very little tolerance toward refugees and, to a certain degree, immigrants. The government is feeding into that anger by taking the types of stands it is taking. It is a hatred.

I would caution the government in terms of the way in which it continues to move forward on this issue. If the government really wants to make a difference, if it really wants to have a more positive impact it should be focusing on how to bring refugees in and process them in a more timely fashion so that those who are legitimate can become a part of the Canadian economy. That would be something that would be wonderful to see from the government.

What was the minister talking about in his comments? He stated that the reason we have Bill C-4 is because of the profiteers, the profiteers being the human smugglers. That is the reason we have this bill. That is what the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism said just a few hours ago.

To what degree would this legislation penalizing the smugglers? The smugglers, generally speaking, are, as far as I am concerned, unethical individuals who base a dollar value on humans. They exploit tragedy. I and members of the Liberal Party have very little sympathy for these profiteers or human smugglers.

Having said that, the impact of Bill C-4 would be far more profound on the refugees, not the smugglers, not the profiteers who the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism says that he is trying to hit and hurt with this particular legislation.

If the minister does not change the legislation, the real victim here will be the refugees because he has established that second tier. He says that we will now be able to hold off in recognizing someone. It could be four, five years before they would ultimately be able to sponsor a family member.

As a member of Parliament, I am sure all offices have communications with immigrants who are trying to sponsor family members from abroad, especially if it is a parent, but also brothers, sisters, siblings, nephews, nieces, and so forth. Do members know what the processing times for those today?

What we are saying is that based on the assumption, and it is a fair assumption, 99% of those who are arriving on the boats are in fact legitimate refugees who need asylum. It would have been nice if the

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Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism were here to provide an answer himself.

• (1645)

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism wants the power and the authority, which he would get through this legislation, to tell refugees that they cannot land in Canada for five years. We can just imagine leaving a country where we were being shot at, we were receiving death threats and so on, landing in Canada considering ourselves fortunate because we survived and then being told that our life was on hold. Yes, we made it to Canada but our life is on hold for maybe five years. After five years we may be able to sponsor our family. That would mean anywhere from nine months to twelve years. Considering the direction in which the government is going it would probably get closer to the latter.

Canada has a moral and legal obligation to accept refugees. We can imagine a 23-year-old man wondering when he would be able to see his wife and 6-year-old child.

I always thought that families were important here in Canada, that Canadians recognized the value of family. Do we see that value in this legislation? I would say no. The minister of immigration does not recognize the value of family and he wants to put it into law and wants us to pass it. Members need to look at what the minister is asking us to do. If the purpose is to target profiteers, then let us change the focus.

The minister himself, in addressing the legislation, said that the government was doing some other things in the background, working with other levels of government and that it has been very successful. He made reference to other boats that were prevented from leaving. Maybe the minister should invest more resources in that as opposed to bringing in legislation that is questionable at best. That would be a good direction for the minister to take.

I would suggest to all members, in particular, government members, that they hold their ministers accountable for the legislation they bring forward. Just because a minister brings in legislation does not mean that it is good legislation. If a minister brings in something and a little red flag, blue flag or orange flag goes up, we have a responsibility to look into it and hold that person accountable, just like I would have welcomed the opportunity to pose some specific questions to the minister of immigration on this legislation.

We do have an immigration standing committee. Even though I am somewhat new to the House of Commons, I am not overly impressed with the immigration standing committee because it does not allow for ongoing questions relating to the accountability of the individual who I believe is most important, and that is the minister of immigration.

There are so many issues facing immigration today and yet the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism would have us address a seriously flawed piece of legislation that would likely get defeated if it were brought to the Supreme Court. That is what he has us debating today. I can tell the House that there is a list of at least a dozen issues, maybe 20, that need to be addressed by the minister in his portfolio.

Routine Proceedings

The minister made reference to the bill going to the immigration standing committee, which is great because that is part of the process. I still think we can strengthen the process by allowing critics and other members of Parliament to ask more specific questions of the minister, because, ultimately, we have the responsibility to think outside a political agenda. I have witnessed a political agenda in this particular bill and the agenda has more to do with hatred I would suggest, although I do not want to over-react. There was a bit of hesitation when I used the word "hatred", so I will just rephrase it.

• (1650)

I am sure every member in this chamber would recognize that refugees contribute a great deal to our economy and they will continue to do that into the future. Overall, refugees have made a significant impact in our economy, our social fabric and who we are today as Canadians, as a country. I will acknowledge the fact that there is a small percentage of refugees that do create some problems and there are some individuals who will take advantage of potential refugees. Those ones upset me and many members all the time, and quite significantly.

The image and the message that the government sends out to the public are not positive when it comes to refugees, and I cited two specific examples. When we have the Prime Minister standing on the back of a boat saying that we are after the human smugglers and brings in legislation of this nature, many Canadians, and members can go and canvass their own constituents, are of the opinion that people who came in on that boat should be shipped back to the country of origin, whether they are legitimate or not. That is because the government of the day has fuelled that sentiment and given that impression either directly or indirectly. Tell me how that is a healthy thing for government to be doing.

I would suggest that there are things we can do, that we have to recognize the importance of the rule of law, that we have to ensure that individual refugees are provided the opportunity to appear and allow for a judge or appeal board to provide a decision in as quick a fashion as possible.

The reason I talk a lot about the process is because if we want to move forward and continue to be a country that can provide hope and opportunities, we need to recognize there are things that government can do to improve the system. We are spending too much time on things that I believe are hurtful. If we want to spend time on improving the system, the biggest recommendation I can give on the whole refugee file is to provide the resources necessary to ensure we have a process that is more timely and that is fair. Whether they are children or adults, whatever gender and whatever part of the world they are coming from, we need to ensure there is a sense of fairness to the process and it is done in a timely way. The quicker it is done, the sooner legitimate refugees will be able to settle and contribute to our communities and for those who are not legitimate, then the sooner they are out of Canada.

• (1655)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard some pretty outlandish statements by the member opposite. In the member's presentation, he has made Canada appear as somewhat of a pariah on the international stage for this bill and what we plan to do, throwing innocent refugees at the mercy of preventative detention. I would contest those statements.

Would the member like to comment on the fact that this legislation brings us in line with the UN protocol against smuggling of immigrants by land, sea and air which, among other things, requires states to criminalize migrant smuggling?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe when the Minister of Immigration gave indication as to the primary reason for the bill, it was all about smugglers and the profiteers. In trying to address the legislation, my emphasis was more so on the refugees and the way in which the legislation would have a negative impact on legitimate refugees to the degree in which it would make the refugees the victims, not the profiteers. I do not understand how members believe that the bill would have that desired impact that the government talks about with regard to the profiteers.

There are other ways of doing it so that we do not have to penalize legitimate refugees who are fleeing countries where, if they remained, they might lose their lives.

• (1700)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. member for Winnipeg North. We are really struggling here with the notion that there is a queue for refugees.

I used to practise in immigration law. I had a lot of refugee claimants. In fact, they mostly were ship-jumpers in Halifax. They would take their one chance to get away from a repressive regime.

I say with some humour, in the hopes of waking up other members around the House, that at one point my colleagues in my law firm said I knew how to say "Hi, sailor" in 27 languages.

However, there is no queue for refugees. Refugees show up with the clothes on their backs. They are trying to get away from a repressive regime. When I have raised this point with the Minister of Immigration, and I have heard it from government members today, it has been said that there is a queue and they just go to a United Nations refugee camp and wait there.

I would like to ask the hon. member for Winnipeg North this question. The claim by the government that there is such a thing as a queue for refugees will be at the heart of the public relations campaign to defend an indefensible bill. We have to really explain to people that the UN High Commission for Refugees is a voluntarily-funded branch of the United Nations. It does not have the capacity to provide places for people, like waiting rooms around the world, in refugee camps. That is not the route refugees take. They show up here, they ask to be assessed and they ask for their rights to be respected.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting this way. I am sure the member will get the appropriate answer.

I would like to table at this time, in both official languages, the 2008-09 and 2009-10 annual reports of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, as well as the Government of Canada's response to these reports.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Winnipeg North with his response.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we recognize that international law guarantees that people who fear persecution have the right to seek asylum in another country. That is in international law. I do not think anything should change on that.

To talk about jumping the queue, again, is just to try to politicize the issue so the government can try to give the impression that people will be done wrong by if it allows boats to come to Canada, whether they have legitimate refugee claims or not. When the government says that they are jumping the queue and when we know full well that in the vast majority of the cases these are legitimate refugees who are seeking asylum is just wrong. Again, when we take a look at international law, there is no queue-jumping. When the lives of people are at risk, people will take the opportunity when the opportunity comes forward. We all need to, and should, appreciate that.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would assert that Vancouver Kingsway is one of the most multicultural ridings in the country. We have a very vibrant and growing Vietnamese community. I dare say that one would be hard pressed to find a Vietnamese family that did not have a family member or knew someone who escaped Vietnam when South Vietnam fell after a long and protracted civil war.

In talking to people in my community, I noted that many of those people left Vietnam by boat and in fact paid people to assist them to leave. Had this legislation been in force in any of the surrounding countries to Vietnam, they would have been treated as criminals as would the people who aided them. They would all have been considered to be in violation of legislation.

The proposed act, section 117, says:

No person shall organize, induce, aid or abet the coming into Canada of one or more persons knowing that, or being reckless as to whether, their coming into Canada is or would be in contravention of this Act.

It is this proposed section that has many church groups and refugee organizations nervous that if they organize or aid someone to come to Canada, they may be in violation of the act. It could simply be by not having valid travel documents to be put in violation of the act and they may be subject to being in violation.

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Could my hon. colleague comment on the advisability of such a section in the legislation?

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is why I make the reference to try to personalize this. If people understand and have an appreciation of why we have refugees coming to Canada on an annual basis or if they talk to people who came to Canada under that classification, whether it was 1 year or 30 years ago, they would get a better appreciation as to the actual situation.

I believe the vast majority, maybe even all the stakeholders, the people who are having to deal with the issue of refugees, would not support this legislation. If it were good legislation, one would think it would get support from stakeholders. I look to the Minister of Immigration to provide us with the list of stakeholders. I would be interested in knowing those stakeholders that say this is good legislation and bring it forward. In terms of numbers, we know a lot do not support it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this question is more for clarification.

I think I heard my hon. colleague say that 99% of those who came on the *Sun Sea* were legitimate refugees. I may be misinformed, but my understanding is that there have not been any hearings yet. How can he say that 99% of those have actually been proven to be legitimate refugees? If I misunderstood him, I would like him to clarify this with the House.

The other thing I find unfortunate in his comments is the implication that on this side of the House there is somehow a lack of compassion. I can say without any question that many of my colleagues in this room have personally cared for refugees in their homes and are part of churches who sponsor refugees regularly. I would ask him to be careful in his insinuation about the lack of compassion.

We are simply trying to ensure that we have a fair process that does not penalize those who really deserve to be treated as refugees.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will address the member's latter comments first.

I do not question that many members in the Conservative caucus have a caring heart and attitude toward refugees. That is why I said one should not make the assumption that when a minister introduces a bill that it is a good bill. Even backbenchers have a role to play in ensuring that legislation is good. However, I suggest this legislation is not good. On the stakeholders, Conservatives may talk about it in caucus and so forth to better debate that particular issue.

However, I was referring to the *Ocean Lady*. My understanding is that of the 76 refugees none of them have been detained. This was one of the questions I wanted to ask the minister about and that was what I made reference to. I was referring to the *Ocean Lady*. I am not too sure about the other one.

I have to be careful in terms of what I say, but it was implied to me that it was at least 99%. As there were 76 refugees, I am assuming they were all released from the *Ocean Lady*. I look forward to the Minister of Immigration actually providing the information in regard to that.

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Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am profoundly sad that Canadians must once again stand to oppose this morally repugnant bill. Immediately I would like to remind the House that the people who stand to be criminalized by this bill, indeed the people who are already victimized as they languish in Canadian detention centres under inhumane conditions for excessive lengths of time, are children, women, victims of torture, abuse and rape, and victims of the kind of poverty that entirely eradicates an individual's inalienable right to self-determination and autonomy.

Already at any given point in time, Canada is holding around 450 non-status migrants in detention centres and maximum security prisons. Dozens of these people at any given time are children. Charges have never been laid against them and they have no idea when they will be released or if they will be deported.

Canada does not jail children unless they are seeking asylum. We do not jail people for years when they have never been charged with a crime, unless they are seeking asylum. We do not jail people without providing access to legal counsel, unless they are seeking asylum. We do not categorically bar prisoners from seeking bail, unless of course they are seeking asylum. We do not jail the traumatized victims of political conflict, abuse, and poverty, unless they are seeking asylum.

Canada is guilty of doing all of this already. The use and misuse of maximum security detention centres to imprison those seeking refugee status is a blight on this nation's integrity. The bill before us today will make this travesty infinitely worse. Among its many problems, Bill C-4 states that anyone arbitrarily labelled as a designated claimant, for reasons left to the discretion of the minister, will be mandatorily detained on arrival in a detention centre or prison and will not have their case reviewed for one full year. Once again, a remind the House that this does include children.

It is incumbent upon the House to consider the health and safety of individuals when we look at a bill that commits people to imprisonment. Health is rarely considered in immigration policy, but study after study from around the globe is proving that immigration detention strategies are creating significant health concerns. A study from the Centre for Population Mental Health Research that was published in the *Public Library of Science* journal finds that the rate of mental disorder among populations held in detention centres are substantially higher than those of people held in community settings. Not surprisingly, children in particular show evidence of severe mental health impairment. Rates of suicide and self-harm are at a level comparable to or higher than that among prison populations.

There is a strong correlation between the mental health of refugees and the length of time spent in detention. When finally released from detention they will almost always suffer from prolonged mental health impairment due to the trauma suffered while they were detained. These detention centres, like the centre for the prevention of immigration in Laval, where upwards of a hundred individuals, including children, are being held at any given time, or like the maximum security prison in Rivière-des-Prairies where refugee claimants make up one-third of the prison population while they have not been charged with any crime or convicted of any crime, are very often the site of human rights violations and abuse. The

migrants held at these detention centres are routinely denied access to any health services, especially mental health services.

Are members here today prepared to assume responsibility for endangering the lives of these people by neglecting their health? When they are eventually assessed, so many of their claims are proved to be legitimate. The government is punishing innocent people. The Conservative members of the House wish to punish more innocent people with harsher mandatory imprisonment for longer periods of time.

According to his own discretion, this bill will allow the minister to retroactively wrench a whole family or part of a family out of their community where they are waiting to hear about their refugee status. In other cases, they may already have refugee status. They will be taken under this law and thrown into detention. Family members would be forceably separated. Children would be forceably removed from their parents despite the fact that their parents have not been accused of being unfit, if their case has never come to court or if they have been flagged by child protection agents. The lasting anguish inflicted by separating a parent from a child or a child from a parent would be, and already is, guilt on the head of the government.

• (1710)

The Canada Border Services Agency jailed 14,362 people from 2008 to 2009 for immigration reasons at the cost of \$45 million of taxpayers' money. Under Bill C-4, with the minister's new power to arbitrarily define any migrant as a human smuggler, these numbers are sure to increase.

The government must make the definition of "designated claimant" clear and transparent. At this point, according to this bill, the minister would have the absolute power to label any group of refugees as designated claimants for largely arbitrary reasons that he will not disclose. Once labelled, a refugee would be subject to the litany of unfair regulations set out by this bill. The discriminatory nature of this arbitrary designation would create two classes of refugees in Canada. This is a clear violation of section 15 of the charter that states that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, even refugees and migrants. It is crucial to the integrity of our charter that all persons are afforded the protection of basic human rights under our law, including those without status.

It is the obligation of the House to not pass legislation that is in violation of our charter. Not only is this bill in violation of our charter, it is also in violation of the United Nations' protocol relating to the status of refugees and our own Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

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We have to recognize that jailing people on Canadian soil in an effort to stop them from fleeing persecution and poverty from wherever they come is completely nonsensical. The bill intentionally and maliciously refuses to draw a distinction between those who are committing the crime of human smuggling and those who are victims of the crime of human smuggling themselves. It is true that people are trafficked to this country under false pretenses and are abused, raped and kidnapped as a result of the human trafficking industry. However, enforcing the same punitive measures against the victims and the criminals themselves is the very definition of the word "insanity".

Earlier today, the member for St. Catharines excused this exact lapse of logic by saying that the human smugglers of the ships disguise themselves as those who are being smuggled. That is absurd. If a criminal wears a disguise while committing a crime, it does not give us reason to change our laws to erase the distinction between the criminals and the victims. Under any circumstance, that proposition is laughable. However, for some reason that line of thinking is tolerated when we speak of the plight of refugees in Canada.

The member for St. Catharines also pointed out that Canadians do not wish to share their health care services with those seeking asylum and who do not yet have status. I would like to state that I am one woman who would be perfectly happy to share the privilege of public health care with those who are most needy and vulnerable.

In December 2009, Jan Szamko died in an immigration centre in Canada after being denied medical aid. In December 1995, Mike Akhinen died from medical neglect at the detention centre in Mississauga known as Celebrity Inn. These are just two cases of neglect that resulted in death. Instances of non-status Canadians being denied medical attention is extremely common and this bill would make it 100% legal.

Refugees come to Canada with legitimate claims, fleeing the worst conditions imaginable. We have a moral obligation to help them. Would the Conservative members of the House be willing to look individuals in the face when they are desperate and ill and deny them a doctor? That is inhumane and I refuse to believe that Canadians are inhumane. I refuse to believe that we are as illogical as this bill. When my colleagues from the government speak endlessly on behalf of what Canadians want them to do, I would like to remind them that the majority of Canadians did not vote for them and they do not necessarily share the same values. I am proud to represent some of the many Canadians who did not vote for them and who do not support this bill.

This bill reduces smuggled human refugees to goods being illegally brought into this country. The government thinks that by raising the duty or the tariffs on the commodity will discourage this trade out of existence. Refugees are not cattle. They are not softwood lumber. They are human beings and human smuggling is not a commodity trade. Maybe we could compare it to a service. Even if we were to follow this line of logic through to its conclusion, we could assume that if this bill were to come into effect it would force human smugglers to raise the price of the service that they provide to refugees in response to the increased tariffs we are now imposing on them. Clearly, it does not make any sense.

• (1715)

Some of the members of the opposition have already spoken about history and historical precedent. I believe it is important to look to history before we act as a nation. Let us look to another time when human beings were treated like commodities to be levied. Imagine how history would regard us if we jailed the refugees coming through the Underground Railroad into Canada during the time of American slavery. I guarantee this bill would bring the same kind of shame on Canada. We would live to regret it.

Beyond the fact that the bill is morally repugnant for all of the reasons I have enumerated in this speech, it is not what it purports to be. How would the news that Canada has new tough-on-smuggling laws ever reach those who are actually fleeing to Canada by these means? How will the victims of poverty and persecution who come to Canada seeking asylum get the news that we just passed some tough new inhumane refugee laws?

The only way this legislation will ever be effective is if the government delivers leaflets around the world explaining our new laws. The bill clearly is not aimed at reducing human smuggling. It is targeting Canadian voters by making them feel like the threat of illegal immigration is greater than it actually is.

I join members of the opposition in opposing the bill. It not only creates an arbitrary process but indeed is discriminatory against the most vulnerable citizens of this world.

• (1720)

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is with regard to the doors being open to legitimate refugees while safeguarding the integrity of our borders. Bill C-4 ensures that criminals looking to play our system and those looking to jump the queue are sent a strong message. Canadians will not tolerate this abuse of our generosity.

I call on the NDP to support the bill and stand with real victims of human smuggling and law-abiding Canadians.

I am curious to know what the definition of "maximum security" is in the hon. member's mind because to me it means something like Millhaven or Kingston Penitentiary. Could the hon. member please give us her definition of what "maximum security" really is?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, that is not the point. It is that we would be jailing people who have come here looking for safety. The government is not making a distinction between those who are committing acts of human smuggling and those who desperately need to leave their countries in order to be safe. That will not be a deterrent to those looking for safety. Rather, it will cause mass amounts of physical and mental health issues. That makes no sense if we look at the situations of the people who are coming to this country looking for help.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her speech. A lot of the conversation taking place is centred around the idea of queue jumping, whether or not it is a myth. The other issue pertains to the two-tiered system that would be created by Bill C-4 carried over from the last session. Could the member comment on that?

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Also, has she had any experience regarding how refugees in the system are dealing with the fact that the bill does not go to the crux of the issue and does not really fix the problem in the sense that there is no great incentive out there not to be involved in this type of work?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, the question of queue jumping speaks to the idea that the members across the way do not understand what a refugee is. It is someone who is in a desperate situation, whose security is at risk, whose health is at risk due to the situation in his or her home country. Refugees do not get in line, they flee, otherwise they could be killed or raped.

Members opposite do not seem to understand that fleeing is fleeing and is not getting in line and waiting. Whether people are in camps or on a boat to come to Canada is just not the point.

As a member of the global community, Canada has a moral obligation to help these people.

● (1725)

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): In the summary, at letter (f), it says the following:

(f) provide for detention rules and a review procedure...

That means that more prisons will have to be built for these people and these families. Who will build them? Will it be the government, the private sector or a public-private partnership? Will there be classrooms for the children? Will special staff be hired to manage the review procedure in these detention centres? Will children be separated from their parents? What are we really talking about here? Is this not just a way of criminalizing these people?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question and comments.

It makes absolutely no sense that the government is talking about being economically responsible and yet wants to build bigger prisons. It makes no sense.

[English]

What is going on is just illogical. I cannot understand what the bill is supposed to be doing. It does not make any sense. It will not do any of the things the Conservatives claim it will do. It does not follow any of the things that are their priorities such as the economy and fairness. It is blatantly opposed to all those things.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little confused by the member's comments. Could she distinguish for me between jail and detention?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, when someone is put away for absolutely no reason and the person did not commit a crime other than to flee for his or her security, I do not care what term is used, the result is that a punishment is being inflicted on the person for something the person has not done. That is the problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her speech. I believe she has gone to the heart of human nature and sensibility. She has touched on a very important point: the separation of children from their parents. When

we study 20th century history, we find examples of the separation of children from parents.

I would like her to tell us how she thinks the international community, in light of the horrible things that happened in the second half of the 20th century, will view the image that Canada is projecting.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for his very good question. We do not seem to have learned a great deal from history. Children have been traumatized by being separated from their parents.

[English]

It creates risks in our society among generations. It causes many other concerns in terms of social understanding. It absolutely does not make any sense. It is not economically viable. It does not make sense in terms of our collectivity in Canada to be doing this to families when five years from now we will say to them that they can come in now. The damage has been done. It creates traumatic experiences and it puts a burden on our society that we do not need.

We should be welcoming these people with open arms and trying to help them instead of making their situation worse.

[Translation]

That does not make sense. We have learned nothing from history.

● (1730)

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add my strongest opposition and objection to the bill at hand, Bill C-4, , the "Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act". I put quotations around the title not because it is the short title of the bill, but because that is not really what the bill is about. It was presented by the Minister of Public Safety earlier as a bill that would protect Canadians and others from human smugglers. In reality, it is a bill that attacks refugees and the Canadian immigration system.

Let us be frank. This bill is not at all about human smuggling. Canada currently has the harshest punishment possible, according to Canadian law, if convicted of human smuggling. Under Canadian law smugglers are imprisoned for life. There is nothing stronger and no more severe form of punishment than life in prison in Canada.

Let us talk about what this bill is really about: playing politics with refugees and instilling a sense of fear in Canadians about refugees. We have seen this bill before. This bill was and is remarkably similar to Bill C-49 presented in the last Parliament. It was opposed by all members of the opposition parties and by so many Canadians across the country from coast to coast to coast.

Let me speak to the false claims and the areas of ambiguity this bill presents.

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First, the bill positions refugees as “queue jumpers”. This is a falsehood. Refugees and asylum seekers must still follow the same processes and procedures of all claimants. It also creates a two-tier immigration system. It creates two different levels of refugees, and a new classification of refugee, a “designated claimant”. These are refugees who have an “irregular arrival”. That means anybody who shows up by boat. Of course the terms in quotations I am borrowing from the bill.

This bill essentially says that someone who arrives in an irregular fashion, such as by boat, is not a refugee but rather is a criminal. This bill says that people who wish to flee war or conflict zones or persecution but do not have the means to purchase an airplane ticket are queue jumpers. Instead, because they cannot buy a plane ticket, they risk their lives. They throw themselves on a rickety cargo boat, spend two months crossing the ocean, any ocean, but no, they are not real refugees. That is what this bill is telling us.

The bill is telling us that they are not real asylum seekers; they are not really fleeing a horrible situation, leaving their families behind, leaving their livelihoods, leaving their homes, leaving a horrible situation. This bill tells us that these people are liars, that they are not real asylum seekers, that they are not risking their lives to come to Canada hoping for a better life. This bill tells us that these people are criminals. This is what the bill and the government are telling us, unfortunately.

When we look at the history of this great country, it is very clear that Canada was built on the backs of immigrants. Historically, boatloads of immigrants arrived at Canada's ports for centuries. Canada saw an immense number of Irish refugees arriving at Canada's sea ports during the famine in Ireland. At that time, Canadians were strongly in opposition to these refugees staying in Canada, yet they were permitted to stay. Today we see that they contribute so much, and that they contribute positively to Canadian society. Now, we see people of Irish heritage all over Canada, including in this House. Many members of Parliament are of Irish descent.

● (1735)

Refugees are people who contribute positively to the land they go to. So how do we as a nation deal with boats carrying refugees that enter Canadian waters? Do we turn them away, forcing them to return to their country of origin? Or rather, as we saw recently, do we have other countries do our dirty work and intercept these boats in international waters so they do not make it here and we do not need to do anything?

Time and again we have seen the consequences of this course of action. In 1914, the *Komagata Maru*, which was carrying 376 passengers from Punjab, India, was forced to return. In the 1930s, the refugees on board the SS *St. Louis* were fleeing Nazi Germany, but were forced to return and were killed by the Nazis. There are many others. Forcing people to return to their country of origin is not the answer.

While this bill specifically attacks refugees who arrive by boat, it will have detrimental effects on all claimants regardless of whether they enter Canada by boat, by air or on foot. This legislation would require the mandatory detention of all designate people arriving in Canada, whether they arrive on foot, by boat or by air. This includes

women, children, babies, the sick, the elderly. Anyone who arrives in Canada by any method would be required to be detained for a minimum of 12 months, an entire year. After those 12 months were served, they might receive some consideration, but they could also be held for up to five years. They would also be denied permanent residence or family reunification for at least five years after that. This is a clear violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In the past, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down mandatory detention without review. This is detention based on identity with no possibility of release until the minister arbitrarily decides that identity has been established. This breaches sections 9 and 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protect people against arbitrary detention and allow the right to prompt review of that same detention. Arbitrary detention is also a violation of a number of international treaties to which Canada is a signatory.

Why are we detaining these people to begin with? People are usually detained because they are a danger to others or they are a flight risk and could disappear before their questioning or trial happens. Should this bill pass, the government would have the right to jail or detain all refugees without proving that they are a danger to society or that they are a flight risk, for a minimum of one year without an appeal process. How is that just?

Do members know the psychological effects detention and imprisonment have on children? Some British researchers have shown that even in a few months of detention the psychological effects on children are tragic. They wet their beds. Some become mute. Others stop learning. They become withdrawn. They are not able to go to school because they cannot focus. Some lose weight. Some do not eat. These psychological and physiological effects have been seen in children who have been jailed for just a few weeks or months. Think of the psychological scars that we would be inflicting on these children who come to our country and are placed in detention centres. Some may call them jails but we call them detention centres. That is where children would be put for at least a year. It is totally unjustifiable.

● (1740)

Furthermore, these people are being detained until they can prove their identity through some form of documentation. Most refugees who come to Canada do not have documentation, regardless of which process they use to enter the country. When people flee their nation, they leave behind everything. When they leave their country due to a natural disaster, this documentation may not exist. How can we realistically expect people who have lived through an earthquake or tsunami and are fleeing their country to have appropriate documentation proving their identity? How can we expect people who have left a war-torn country to carry valid identification? A lot of refugees arrive at our shores without identification. These are people who could be classified as designated.

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Some of the refugee claimants who arrived in Canada by the *MV Sun Sea* now live in my constituency. I have spoken with many of them. They have told me the stories of their trip to Canada and their arrival in B.C. and how so many of them were borderline holding on to their lives. We all know that one man perished on the journey across the Pacific. Many of them had United Nations identity cards. They had UNHCR refugee cards. Upon their arrival, the people who greeted them gathered all of their identity cards and then, when there were not the same number of identity cards, as individuals they were told that they did not have adequate identification onboard. Regardless of whether or not they had a refugee card, they were all detained. Thankfully, many of these people have been released because our great service men and women at the Canada Border Services Agency took the time to sort out the identity cards. Unfortunately, many of them are still being detained today.

Under Bill C-4, decisions on claims by designated persons cannot be appealed to the refugee appeal division. Eliminating the right to appeal can have tremendous consequences for these so-called designated persons.

I am sure that most of us have heard stories from our constituents about failed refugee applications, about a person who has left his or her country only to face a heavily bureaucratic process. The person does not have the right kind of supporting documentation to present at a hearing and his or her application is unfortunately rejected. Sadly, some of us have heard about the horrific consequences of these failed refugees and what awaits them when they are deported to their country of origin. Unfortunately, mistakes can happen, which is why we have the appeals process. That is why refugees deserve to be able to appeal to the refugee appeal division.

My personal story is like that of many immigrants to Canada. My father came to Canada as a refugee claimant from Sri Lanka. He was fleeing the civil war during the early parts of the war. Once he was granted permanent residency, he sponsored my mother and my sisters to join us. We were reunited in Canada. I am proud to say that the child of a refugee claimant in Canada is now a member of Parliament.

It is difficult for me to imagine in the middle of this violent conflict my father having the time to ensure that he had all of his documentation aligned, ready to go, everybody's identification ready to go, supporting documents ready to go, when he was running away from being shot or his country being bombed. How can we expect people fleeing persecution, fleeing a war, to have all their identification in order? Fortunately, his application was approved and my family was able to join him here in Canada.

It is absolutely unreasonable to expect people to collect all the necessary documents and to have them available upon arrival. My father was lucky that he left at the early stages of the war, but the people who left later, the people fleeing from other countries because they were being bombed, this is absolutely unfair.

• (1745)

That is why there are checks and balances in our refugee process and why they are so integral. This absolutely goes against the compassionate nature that Canadians are known for, Canada's values. Canada's values lie in being compassionate, being concerned for human rights and being concerned for human beings.

When I first saw the bill, I asked myself why the government would propose such legislation and why it would put forward a bill that attacked refugees.

I am taken aback by the idea of queue-jumpers. The government is trying to paint refugees as jumping the immigration queue. When people are fleeing persecution, fleeing a war or an area that is attacked by a natural disaster, they cannot be called queue-jumpers.

With a large immigrant population in Scarborough—Rouge River, I can easily say that the number one form of casework in my constituency is immigration-related. In my immigration casework, there is an unbelievable amount of family reunification cases. People in my area are frustrated that they are waiting 5 to 10 to 15 years in the process. They are stuck in the process waiting to have their families, their loved ones, join them here in Canada. When they begin the process of bringing their parent or sibling over to Canada, they are told that it will take 5 to 10 years. They apply and they wait and wait and continue to wait. The backlog for parents who are waiting to come to Canada is in the hundreds of thousands. Why? It is because the number of visas for parents and grandparents issued this year has been reduced by close to 44% of what it was. The wait times are getting longer and longer. This year, there are only 11,000 parents who can come to Canada. In 2005 and in 2006, the target was 20,000. Now it is only 11,000. This is a reduction of 9,000 people in this current year. This is not the only backlog that exists, unfortunately.

The government claims that it is clearing the backlog for skilled workers when, in actuality, the backlog for skilled workers grew. In 2005, there was a backlog of 487,000. Now, it is 508,000. In the past six years, this backlog has grown by 173,000 applications.

This so-called clearing the backlog is, unfortunately, not working. It is not working for skilled workers and it is not working for families trying to reunify. Immigrants are getting resentful because they are waiting longer and longer to bring their loved ones to Canada. They are being told by the government that there are people who are jumping the queue. There are hundreds of thousands of people waiting patiently, some not so patiently, to come to Canada. This is not due to nothing other than failed immigration policy. People are really upset that they have to wait so long.

However, rather than amending immigration policy to actually deal with the backlogs and the time constraints, the Conservative government is trying to find a scapegoat: the new refugees who are coming. This is not the government's fault or the fault of the failed immigration policies, but the refugees' fault. They are jumping the queue and taking the spots of all those other people who have been patiently waiting.

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What the government has failed to mention is that for some refugees there is no queue to jump. There is no lineup for people who are in serious danger, for people who are living through a civil war, for people who are being persecuted because of their gender, their religion, their sexual orientation, et cetera. When their lives or the lives of their family is called into question, there is no line. Once they are safely in Canada, they must then join the exact same queue as everyone else and wait their turn to get their status in our country.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is so eager to paint Canada in tarnished light for doing what ordinary Canadians see as the right thing, which is protecting the safety of our borders, the integrity of our immigration system and the security of our streets and communities. This response is measured, it is firm and it meets all of Canada's international obligations.

Would the member comment on why her party is so determined to allow human smugglers to keep on taking advantage of Canada's immigration?

• (1750)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, the bill does not really mention human smugglers very much, except in the title. When we actually look at the bill piece by piece, it mentions refugees a lot more than it mentions people who are smuggling people into this country.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives, the government and the bill do not actually talk about or attack human smugglers in the bill.

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the effect that a long waiting list can have on someone applying for permanent residency. She also stated that there is a very large backlog in the system.

Can my colleague comment on the effect that waiting an additional five years, as proposed by this bill, will have on the constituents in her riding?

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, people are waiting for their parents or grandparents to join them here.

I will talk about my grandparents. My grandmother is 93 years old right now and I am lucky to have her here with me. If I were waiting another 5, 10 or 15 years for my grandmother to join us, I would not be able to meet my grandmother. The last time I would have seen her was when I was five years old.

Unfortunately, that is the reality of so many people living in Scarborough—Rouge River, but I know it is the same reality for many Canadians living across the country from coast to coast to coast. They are not able to reunite with their family members. We are forcing families to be apart and children to live without their parents.

Just recently I got a letter from a constituent. The mother and child are here but the father is stuck back home. The child came here when she was two. She is now nine and does not know her own father.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with the hon. member and her personal experiences. My mom was in a forced labour camp in Nazi Germany and my

father survived the Soviet gulag, so I understand what it means to find a safe haven in a country with freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

However, I am perplexed why the hon. member thinks that smugglers are actually benevolent in some way because they are exploiting asylum seekers trying to come to Canada.

Although there may be examples aboard those ships of legitimate individuals, I would like to know why the hon. member thinks that there is absolutely no risk to Canadian security and safety. Would the hon. member be prepared to put her own personal guarantee against anybody stepping off one of those ships?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I am not an expert in identifying individuals. That is why we have those people in the RCMP and at the Canada Border Services Agency who are trained to do these things.

I will not provide a personal guarantee to anybody about anything to do with people coming off a boat. However, I have a problem when the member opposite and the bill only talks about individuals who are risking their lives by throwing themselves on a cargo boat and coming across an ocean. These are the people who are being targeted by the bill.

Unfortunately, there are agents who are smugglers and who send people by airplane, but those people are not being targeted by the bill, unfortunately, and only the people who are the poorest of the poor and who are risking their lives are being attacked by the bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her wonderful speech, which allowed us to see the human side of the situation of refugees and immigrants. It is important to understand the possible consequences of implementing the arbitrary measures proposed in Bill C-4. This can have human, economic and social impacts since a traumatic experience can take a very long time to get over.

Since the government is always going on about security, does the hon. member believe that this bill, as proposed, will somehow improve national security?

• (1755)

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I really do not see any difference in an increase to the level of our national security. Our forces do a really good job. This bill is attacking refugees who are coming to Canada seeking a safe haven, like the member for Etobicoke Centre earlier mentioned. I do not think people who are coming to find a home that would welcome them, that would allow them opportunities and provide their children a life are risking the security of our country.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about what is and is not in the bill. The hon. member referenced two ships that were infamously turned away. I am not sure where in this legislation it contemplates turning any ships away.

Government Orders

She also seems to want to have it both ways. On the one hand, she talks about the professionalism of our security services, the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP. On the other hand, she suggests that the people who have been detained, specifically the individuals who came off these two ships last summer, were been treated unfairly, that the officials in British Columbia and the people who took care of their health, education and endeavoured to find out who they were and under what circumstances they came somehow treated these people so poorly that they have been left traumatized by the experience of being in Canada. I suggest that is absolutely not the case and they were treated properly.

Would she agree with me that it is the responsibility of a government to protect sovereignty and to ensure anybody who seeks to come to this country is the person he or she says? That would include, since she is not willing to give a personal guarantee, that the RCMP and the security services of our country endeavour to make sure that everybody who wants to come here actually comes here for the right reason.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, the one ship I spoke about was the *MV Sun Sea*. When the people were kept in detention, there was only one member of Parliament, as far as I know, who visited them in the detention centre and that was the New Democrat member of Parliament for Burnaby—New Westminster. I was actually providing some translation services and working with local community members on the ground who were visiting individuals in the detention centre on a regular basis.

As I mentioned earlier, people who came out of the detention centre are now living in my constituency. They have said that the individuals treated the adults well, but when children are separated from families and kept in detention centres for long periods of time, it has psychological and physiological effects on children. The member probably missed that in my speech.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for withdrawal of the bill unless it can prove itself to be different and unless we can make some serious amendments to it because the unintended consequences of the bill will have disastrous affects.

No one here thinks human smuggling and human trafficking is good. We know it exploits people, whether it is because they are poor, or they are seeking work in another country, or they are fleeing persecution and fear for their lives. Exploitation of that kind is in fact egregious and all of us agree on that. We all want to do something to target the actual people who do that exploitation.

At the same time, it is not a simple black and white issue. Many people are seeking to come to this country because they fear for their lives and that of their families. Many of them are women who fear they will be raped. We know in certain parts of the world, because of their different caste or religion, or whether they are journalists, or no matter what they are, many people are in danger. History has shown us that people who are afraid, who are in danger and fear for their lives and that of their families will do absolutely anything to survive and to save their families. So many of them sell what little they have and they find ways of even buying passage onboard a ship to come here.

Let us separate the victim from the smuggler. If the bill had new amendments that would deal with those people who exploit, I think

we could talk about that. However, the bill has muddied the waters. It seeks to take the victims, the people who are genuine refugees, who are afraid and who seek asylum in our country, and creates a sense that these people are wrong-doers, that they are criminals, that they have no valid reason to seek asylum at all in our country. It creates a sense of xenophobia and fear among Canadians because it muddies the waters and it creates a sort of broad and generic term that does not clearly define what the problem is.

In 2005 the Liberal government and the minister of justice brought in a bill on this issue. It was a bill that tried to deal with the complexity of human smuggling and human trafficking. It talked about preventing the trafficking itself, which is dealing with some of the failed states that we talk about, helping them with democratic institutions and playing a role abroad. It talked about preventing poverty in other parts of the world where people might seek refuge because of lack of poverty and the ability to feed their families.

Prevention was a huge piece. Prosecution of the actual smuggler, the person committing the crime, was a huge part. There were very heavy sentences in prosecution put down. It also talked about protecting the victim, the person who was being smuggled, or trafficked, or exploited. There was a real balance in the bill. It also talked about building partnerships with other nations, with international organizations, with international humanitarian groups, with police around the world, like Interpol, to try to find ways to deal with the criminal element of traffickers.

It was a solid bill and I would have thought that if the government wanted to add to that bill, there were lots of amendments it could have made that would have dealt with it from that kind of balanced perspective. However, what we see here is that this bill catches in its net, and I want to be kind and not say it targets, but inadvertently catches in its net genuine refugees and it creates significant barriers to those who are seeking asylum. In fact, it re-victimizes them if we look at the bill clearly.

I want to back up a bit and look at the history of many of the so-called illegal refugees who have come to our shores over the history of Canada. There were those people who we called the Vietnamese boat people, many of whom are here. They came in boats. We opened our arms so that many of them now are really strong citizens of this country. We saw other groups. In the history of the second world war the *St. Louis* came here with Jews aboard it. No one knew what was going on in Europe at the time, so everyone thought it was a scam and sent these people back to certain death in the camps in Germany. We know there were about 80 Estonians in World War II who came to these shores on a tiny little boat that was supposed to take 40 people.

• (1800)

We have made mistakes in the past in our country, turning away people who were genuinely seeking help. We do not want to repeat those mistakes. The Prime Minister himself called that the black history of Canada. We have made apologies to these groups. We have given them redress. We have done everything to try to right some of those wrongs we did when we took a sledgehammer to a delicate issue and problem.

We recognize that even now. Many of the so-called refugees that we say are the United Nations convention refugees live in camps, in a sort of free zone between countries that are in conflict. We also know that in the days of Nazi Germany, we did not know what was going on at the time. We were not aware of the full extent of what was happening in Vietnam.

Historically we have not known what is going on in some states, with the quiet pogrom against various people, the quiet disappearance of people in many countries that are supposed to be bona fide countries that we trade with and talk to.

We need to know that people are fleeing for their lives. We need to apply a level of humanitarian empathy toward what is happening to these people. In fact, a very famous illegal migrant to our country came with her family, stowed away illegally aboard a ship coming to our shores. It turns out it was one of very great governors general of the country, the Right Hon. Adrienne Clarkson.

We cannot just throw a piece of jello at the wall and see if it slides or sticks. This is about people's lives. We have to deal with it very differently.

What we would create with this is a two-tiered system of refugees in the country. First and foremost, these refugees would be detained for 12 months without a review. This violates section 10 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In fact, the current provisions within the charter and within law demand some kind of review after 48 hours. The government now suggests this should be 12 months. Children will be detained for 12 months in a camp. This is unconscionable. That violates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Do we not care about the international conventions and treaties on to which we have signed?

In fact, under the United Nations convention on the status of refugees, denying asylum to arrivals who come seeking asylum to the shores of any nation, even if those arrivals are illegal, violates section 31 of the United Nations convention on the status of refugees. Therefore, we are already denying and violating our own laws, our own constitution and international treaties that we have signed.

When we put people away after they have been found out to be valid refugees, they are being denied liberty for five years, taking away the ability to get any documents in those five years. For those five years they are stateless, neither permanent residents or temporary residents or citizens. They are nothing. The police can ask them to come and report at any time, asking them whatever questions they wish to and the refugees must produce documents. What is happening in the country, when it has been proven they are genuine refugees and they are still treated in that way.

Government Orders

There is ample legislation in the country dealing with and detaining individuals who are criminals when there is in fact reason for Canadians to fear for their safety or who we think are a flight risk. There are things that we can use. We have instruments to use right now.

Let us imagine the economic loss of opportunity that will be created. For five years someone is unable to work or do anything. These people may come with skills or trades and may be able to contribute to the country, to the productivity and the economic benefit of this nation.

We heard the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism say that today, that immigrants and refugees have come to this country and contributed to nation-building and growth. We are denying five years of a person's ability to do that. During that time people lose their skills, their certification and are unable to work at that because they have lost all the skills and training they had.

To take away the value of these refugees to Canada and to Canada's economic growth and prosperity does not make any sense to me at all. Therefore, for most of us, it is an issue of fully re-victimizing people, not just for 12 months but for 12 months and then for 5 years after, 6 full years. It does not make any sense. It certainly does not give Canada's reputation a boost. It makes us look as if we have become a mean-spirited nation over this period of time.

• (1805)

There is a growing notion among people that an illegal refugee is automatically a danger to our society. I gave some examples of people who have not damaged this country, who have come here and helped to build a strong nation and are strong contributors to our country.

I know that the Prime Minister apologized for all of the bad things that we used to do. He called it the dark history of Canada. We need to think this thing through very carefully. We see an arbitrary attitude: "Who cares. Let them eat cake. There are always going to be bad people and if we find two bad people in a group of 100, then let us slam the two and throw away the other 98. We are going to sledgehammer legislation to catch two people who may or may not be violating the law".

Let us criminalize the ones who are exploiting. Let us criminalize the smugglers. Let us find ways to work with others to chase them down and to deal with that issue, but let us not victimize people any more. That kind of doublespeak does not help. It creates among Canadians a deep sense of xenophobia. Everyone is afraid of that other, that is going to harm them, when most of us have been part of that other at some point in time in the history of this country.

Government Orders

I would ask the government to look at the bill carefully. I would ask the government to do one of three things. One choice would be to withdraw the bill because it is the same bill we had prior to the election in the last Parliament. Everyone said it was a bad bill. The government could accept amendments. We could have a generous length of time to look at the bill at committee and present amendments. That would take political will. It would take goodwill. It is a majority government and there is no need to use a fist to ram everything through. The government could actually listen to parliamentarians and people who say there are ways in which the bill could be made better. At the least, the bill should be sent as a reference on certain questions of legality and constitutionality to the Supreme Court of Canada so the court could decide whether the bill is legal and constitutional. Most scholars have told us it is not. Most of us in the House know it is not. I would suggest that the government knows it is not.

The bill plays on emotions. It tells half-truths to Canadians. It confuses them. It muddies the waters. What we are creating is a fear about people who may need Canada to help them find new lives and save their families just as we would if we were fleeing persecution here in Canada. Let us hope that none of us ever has to do that, but let us remember that history has taught us otherwise. Let us remember that there are many people who came here as illegal migrants and are contributing to Canadian society in major ways. They are hard-working people who are helping to build this great nation of ours.

Let us withdraw the bill, or at least send it to the Supreme Court on questions of constitutionality and legality.

• (1810)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight. The member suggested there is no opportunity for those seeking refugee status, but the bill does allow for that. It does allow for those arriving on vessels to have access to Canada's asylum system and are deemed eligible to make a refugee claim. They will receive a hearing on the merits of their claim before the independent Immigration and Refugee Board.

The member led those who are watching the debate to believe there will be no opportunity but there will be an opportunity. The bill does allow for that. It introduces measures to deter the criminal activity of human smuggling and to create enough disincentive so that in the future, people do not place themselves at risk by taking part in the smuggling operations.

To say that these people have no way of claiming refugee status is not true.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, there are United Nations convention refugees, as I said in my speech earlier. They are people who go into the lineup and sit in camps for years and years until a country will take them. They are called convention refugees. Then there are those who cannot stay because they are afraid. There are no no-fight zones for them to stay in. They have to run and hide. They will do anything to save their lives. Saying that these people do not have to take part in this does not sound reasonable or rational to me. If a person is going to die or be killed tomorrow, if a person is fleeing and hiding with members of his or her family, the person would do anything to save them.

To say that they have access is not true. When they came they would be forced to be detained for 12 months without review. The current law states that within 48 hours they have to have some sort of review to check their refugee status. The hon. member is leading us astray when she says that they have recourse. They do not. Children would be detained for a whole year. Then for five years they would be stateless persons with no documents and they would be subject to recall at any time by police. That is a denial of human rights and civil liberties.

• (1815)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have noticed that this debate has dwelled a lot on the frame of mind of people who are refugees or in a situation of complete and utter distress. It is a situation I have never seen and I hope I never will. I am willing to bet that the vast majority of us if not all of us in the House have never been in that position. We have to juxtapose that with what is best for the nation and what is best for them. In saying that, there are several issues at play.

One is we are creating a two-tiered element. In the past we talked about country of origin and now we are talking about a two-tiered element. These are classifications put on human beings under an extreme amount of stress. This has to be a thorough debate simply because they cannot participate in it and I am glad it is happening in this way.

Shifting to the more domestic side of things, this is a question on what is contained within the amendment we put forward this morning. It is about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and protecting against arbitrary detention and prompt review of detention because Bill C-4's provisions violate international obligations relating to refugees and respecting the treatment of persons seeking protection.

I would like my colleague to comment on those who are seeking protecting juxtaposed against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, earlier I talked about the fact that this bill is in violation of many treaties that we have signed.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a national piece of legislation. In fact, to arbitrarily detain people without any recourse or review for up to 12 months would violate section 10 of our charter. The current legislation says only 48 hours,

Canada was one of the first nations to sign proudly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, we would see children being detained for up to 12 months. Even if the country said that it would not detain children, what would we do with them? Where would we send them? Would we take them away from their parents? Would we put them on a boat somewhere out in the ocean? Would we leave them in no man's land?

This is a ridiculous piece of legislation in that it does not even pay attention to the basic, logical, legal human rights of people.

Government Orders

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in the House, but I wish I did not have to speak on this issue.

I look back to what we did recently in Parliament. We passed a piece of legislation that addressed refugee issues in a very comprehensive way.

It really puzzles me that the bill before us came under public safety. Since when have we started to look at immigration and citizenship issues as issues of public safety? The legislation refers most of the time to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. I believe that the wrong minister has presented this bill. It needs to be addressed under immigration.

My colleagues have made some wonderful points about the five years that a person would have to wait to get any papers before being able to travel. A person could wait up to a year to see what kind of designation he or she was going to get. That is a long time. After that it could be another five years. If the person does not report on the right date, it could actually be lengthened to six years. We would be looking at seven years before the person could apply for residency.

I want us to look at the human element. We all value our families and our safety and security. I want us to look at what we are proposing for families who are going to be moving here under refugee status from very difficult circumstances. We are saying that it will be not one, five or six years, but possibly seven years before they could apply for permanent residence. It means many years of having no travel documents and no status.

It also brings to my mind a young woman with whom I have been dealing. She is a refugee from Somalia. She moved to Canada about four and a half years ago. She brought three of her children with her. She left one of her children behind with her mother because the child was still a toddler, two years old. When she got to Canada she wanted to be able to work and she did not know who would look after the two year old. The mother is elderly and she has applied for the child to join her. The child is eight years old. She left that child behind at the age of two.

Under the new proposal, people cannot even apply for five, six or seven years, depending on their luck or the arbitrary decision of someone. Then when applying after that many years, they could wait another three, four, five, six, seven or eight years. That same two year old could be 14 or 15 years old.

Surely when the United Nations came up with a convention regarding people seeking asylum under the refugee status, it did not have in mind that families would be separated for that length of time. I want members to imagine the impact on that mother who lives in my community, even under our current rules. She comes to my office two or three times a week looking for some magic to speed things up.

I want us to always remember that when we sit in this very august House and pass legislation, it has a real impact on families and it will have an impact on those families and individuals moving to this country. What message are we sending around the world?

• (1820)

There was a time in my youth when I travelled around Europe and people used to want to wear the Canadian flag. Americans travelled wearing the Canadian flag. I asked them why they carried a Canadian flag when they were American. I had not moved to Canada at that time and I was interested. They said that it was because Canada was held in such high esteem. If we start taking these kinds of steps in which we create two levels of refugee status and we are seen as separating families for 5, 10, 12 years, very soon Canada's image internationally will be tarnished.

We see ourselves as and we are a compassionate and caring nation. We give a great deal of attention and forethought to humanitarian needs. I would say that the essence of this bill is not humanitarian. It has very little compassion built into it.

This morning I heard my colleague from across the aisle speak very eloquently to the need to punish smugglers. I absolutely agree but I believe we have legislation that exists now that gives the highest sentence possible that any Canadian court can give, which is a life sentence. We do not have punishment beyond a life sentence in Canada, which I am happy about. For me, that punishment already exists.

At this time, we should not punish people who are already victims, because that is what refugees are. They have already been victimized. They have had to leave their homes. They are running away. They have left their belongings behind and some have left their family members behind. They find asylum across the border and eventually hope to get into countries like Canada. When they come here, they make contributions and become wonderful members of society.

Let us not make further victims of those refugees now by making them go through all these unnecessary hoops, which are not going to deter the smugglers or agents who might be involved in wrongdoing. If we are worried about smugglers using the refugee status to bring people into this country illegally, then let Parliament and the government provide funding to the RCMP and other enforcement agencies. Let there be more oversight over the laws that we already have.

As I said previously, we already have a law in place that gives human smugglers the highest possible punishment. Now it is about enforcing that legislation and finding the smugglers. We will not find the smugglers sitting on a boat that is bringing refugees to Canada. I always say that, for all we know, they are wearing Armani suits and sitting in a New York or Toronto cafe drinking cappuccinos. If we are really after the people who are breaking our laws and abusing the refugee laws we have right now, let us dedicate resources and tackle that issue so that we are actually tackling the issue, instead of now, with this legislation, making things more difficult for a very victimized group already.

I have to be honest. I stayed up to go through some of this legislation and kept asking what the purpose of this was. What are we hoping to achieve? We are a nation of immigrants. We have refugees who come here from all over the world and I would say that we have not had any more than a handful who have been anything but legitimate.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1825)

If that is the case, why are we doing this? Why are we instilling some kind of fear in everyday Canadians that there is a gargantuan problem out there and that this is the magic pill. This is not a magic formula to address those who break our laws. All this does is divide families for a longer period and humiliate, and I use that word deliberately, people who have suffered.

I have had the privilege of working with refugee families as a volunteer in the evenings and on weekends while I was a teacher, and I have had the privilege of teaching young people who have come from refugee camps. I remember a young man I reached out to and what his reaction was. He came from a very violent background and what he needed was security and assistance. Those are the kinds of families that may be in limbo for up to 12 months and then, if they are designated into this category, it could be another five or six years.

Let us, as Canadians, remember our humanity and our compassion.

● (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am pleased to tell the member for Newton—North Delta that she will have up to eight minutes remaining for her remarks, and then there will be a period of 10 minutes for questions and comments when this motion is up for debate again in the House.

[Translation]

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

POVERTY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question that I raised in June in the House on child and family poverty. At that time, I talked about the fact that nearly 700,000 children in Canada were living in poverty. I asked the minister what the government was doing. The minister at the time acknowledged that the effects of the global recession had been increasing poverty in Canada. However, the substance of her answer did not indicate that there was any meaningful action being taken on the part of the government.

I want to refer to a September 2011 report from the Conference Board of Canada called "Child Poverty". It essentially lays out why we should be concerned about child and family poverty in this country. The report had a couple of key messages. First, that Canada scores a C grade and ranks 13 out of 17 peer countries, that more than one in seven Canadian children live in poverty. When we talk about first nations, it is one in four children. When we are talking about children, of course, we are not talking just about children but about children and their families.

The report puts child poverty into context. The report indicates that children who experience poverty, especially persistent poverty, are at a higher rate of suffering health problems, development delays

and behavioural disorders. They tend to attain lower levels of education and are more likely to live in poverty when they become adults.

The OECD says that failure to tackle the poverty in exclusion facing millions and their families is not only socially reprehensible but it will also weigh heavily on a country's capacity to sustain economic growth in years to come. That is very important because, of course, we will be relying on those children to become productive adults and support us in our old age.

The report had a question, "Is the child poverty rate declining in Canada?" And, of course, no surprise to many New Democrats, the answer is, absolutely not.

In 1989, the House of Commons passed a unanimous motion to make child poverty history by the year 2000. Initially, there was a drop in child poverty but by the mid-2000s it had increased once again to 15.1%.

There are other countries that are taking meaningful action on that, one being the United Kingdom. It set out a 20-year mission in 1999 to end child poverty through a series of integrated policies, including strengthening early learning, education, affordable housing and health services, as well as raising the minimum wage and augmenting child benefits. It has had some success with those policies. As we can see, other western countries with similar kinds of systems that we have here in Canada have taken meaningful action.

The Conference Board of Canada did go on to state what Canada could do to become a leader on child poverty. It stated that the government needs to fund jobs training, provide child care and introduce things like tax incentives for lower-paid workers.

What concrete measures will the government take to eliminate child and family poverty in this country?

Dr. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan for raising the issue of children and poverty in Canada.

From the outset, I will say that I am as committed as anyone in the House to seeing a decrease in child poverty in Canada and I am confident that we are on the right path toward a steady decline in child poverty.

Our economic action plan has been there to fight poverty. Investments made by our government through the economic action plan, including temporary enhancements to employment insurance as well as permanent increases in child benefits and programs such as the working income tax benefit have prevented many more Canadian families from falling into a low income bracket.

We believe that the family is the building block of society and that one of the most important investments we can make as a country is to help families with the costs of raising their children.

Our government provides over \$14 billion annually in benefits for families with children through the universal child care benefit, the Canada child tax benefit, including the national child benefit supplement for low income families, and through the child tax credit.

Since 2006, our government has made significant investments in benefits for families with children.

In 2006, we introduced the universal child care benefit, which pays \$100 per month to all families with children under the age of six to help them with the costs of caring for their children. The UCCB alone has lifted approximately 24,000 families with over 55,000 children out of low income circumstances.

In 2007, we introduced the child tax credit, which provides tax relief to families and parents in recognition of the additional costs associated with raising children. It provides a maximum tax value of over \$300 in tax relief to more than three million Canadian families with children.

In budget 2009, we increased the amount that families with children can earn before benefits under the Canada child tax benefit, including the national child benefit supplement, thereby providing increased support for low and modest income families with children.

The national child benefit supplement has been successful in reducing the incidence of families with children living in low income and in reducing the severity of low income for those families who continue to live below the low income threshold.

In budget 2010, we reiterated our commitment to giving Canadian parents choices in child care. We improved the taxation of the universal child care benefit to ensure that single parent families are treated fairly. We enhanced the delivery of child benefits for parents with joint custody.

In addition, we have introduced a series of tax measures to better recognize other expenses, such as the child fitness tax credit and the children's arts tax credit included in budget 2011.

One of the best ways out of poverty is to help Canadian workers gain skills that lead to employment. Our government's approach to reducing poverty emphasizes giving Canadians the skills and opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency while providing targeted support for those facing particular barriers.

• (1835)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Conference Board of Canada and other reports have indicated that child and family poverty is increasing in this country. There are a number of measures that could be taken in order to alleviate that poverty.

I talked earlier about a job strategy. A comprehensive job strategy is an important part in lifting children and families out of poverty as is a national child care program.

There is one concrete measure that the government could take. In the previous Parliament, Tony Martin introduced Bill C-545, An Act to Eliminate Poverty in Canada. I have reintroduced Tony Martin's bill as Bill C-233. In conjunction with consultations across Canada, that bill came out with some very concrete steps that could be taken.

Adjournment Proceedings

Would the parliamentary secretary and the government support Bill C-233, An Act to eliminate poverty in Canada?

Dr. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we are very much focused on this subject. We introduced the working income tax benefit in 2007 to help ensure that more low income families are financially better off as a result of getting a job.

In budget 2009, the tax benefit was enhanced by \$580 million, effectively doubling the initial investment to provide further support to working families and to other Canadians.

In 2011, approximately 1.5 million working Canadian families are expected to benefit from the working income tax benefit.

We also extended work sharing agreements to keep Canadians working by up to 26 weeks to a maximum of 78 weeks.

We are seeing the results of these investments. In the first eight months of 2011, employment increased by 194,400. This is good news for Canadians and Canadian families.

Under budget 2011, we provided additional funding to make available an extension of up to 16 weeks for active or recently terminated work sharing agreements to be phased out by October 2011.

The family is the building block of our society. Our priority—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The parliamentary secretary may know that we have exhausted our time on that particular question.

• (1840)

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the minister for a clarification on the answer she provided to the House in June regarding the needs of seniors.

I have been listening to seniors and meeting with seniors' organizations over the summer. I have heard over and over how there is a desperate lack of funding for programs and a very real and legitimate fear that Canada is not prepared for the rapidly rising seniors population.

I am hoping the minister has had an opportunity to meet with organizations as I have. I am sure if she has done so that she will have heard the same messages over and over again, and the extraordinary ideas put forward by people who are working with our seniors or who are seniors themselves. These ideas would go a long way to address the needs of an aging population. I have heard loud and clear from everyone with whom I have spoken that we are in desperate need of a comprehensive plan that will ensure that we can address this demographic shift.

Adjournment Proceedings

The most important issue voiced over and over is that seniors want to stay for as long as possible in their own homes. They want to be in their communities, near their friends and families. I really do not think this is asking too much.

It is very clear that we need a home care plan, a plan that ensures seniors can stay in their homes and that any modifications needed to be done to those homes are available at an affordable rate.

We also need to make sure that seniors can access services without having to travel great distances, especially as their mobility becomes more and more challenged.

A network of community hubs would be an effective way of assuring that access. This would also help combat the solitude that affects many seniors, especially single seniors or those caring for their partner or loved ones.

What our seniors are asking for is affordable and appropriate housing that will meet their needs as they age. As their abilities change, our older loved ones need appropriate care within the community or residence in which they live. Access to families and their social networks is the key to health and safety for our seniors.

I have also heard that seniors often were not informed about the services available to them, or how to access the information to connect with those services. A community hub could operate as a central location where seniors could go for assistance with health care, financial issues, government funding and other services that directly affect them.

Finally, I heard about elder abuse. It is difficult to paint elder abuse with one brush. It comes in all forms, physical, sexual, financial and psychological. The scale of the abuse can vary dramatically. It can be something that has been happening over a lifetime or can occur when a senior becomes frail and vulnerable.

The source of the abuse can be caregivers, a spouse, children or even strangers looking to take advantage of a vulnerable lonely person. Often the abuse is hidden, not spoken of.

This is a great tragedy. We need a program that can measure and address the varying needs of our older loved ones suffering from abuse or abandoned in our community. I ask the parliamentary secretary across the aisle if she knows if the minister has a plan or is working on a plan to provide our aging population with the protection and funding for the programs they need as they retire.

Dr. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here today to outline all the actions the Government of Canada has taken to combat elder abuse.

I appreciate the question by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe as it has provided me with an opportunity to raise awareness of this serious issue.

Members of the House surely know that elder abuse takes many different forms, among them financial exploitation, physical and mental abuse, and neglect. It is estimated that 4% to 10% of older adults in Canada will experience one or more forms of abuse at some point in time in their senior years.

The Government of Canada has been very active on this issue of elder abuse. The federal elder abuse initiative, launched as part of budget 2008, took a focused federal approach to combatting this problem. It did so by raising awareness and developing resource materials for front-line professionals who provide support and services to seniors.

The Government of Canada invested \$13 million over three years in support of this initiative.

The cornerstone of the federal elder abuse initiative was a national awareness campaign called “Elder Abuse - It's Time To Face The Reality”. This campaign, launched in June 2009 and which ran again in October 2010, used television, print and the Internet to convey its powerful message.

This groundbreaking advertising campaign helped Canadians understand what elder abuse is and provided information on these issues.

• (1845)

[Translation]

The campaign was far-reaching.

[English]

Based on the results of a post-campaign survey, the advertisements left audiences with a strong impression and the public became more aware of the issues of elder abuse. Since the beginning of the campaign, more than 80,000 visits have been made to the elder abuse awareness Internet page at seniors.gc.ca. Several thousand calls have been received and more than 100,000 resource documents have been sent to Canadians.

One of the greatest accomplishments of the initiative has been the robust legacy of information and resources that is now available to Canadians through seniors.gc.ca and at 1-800-O-Canada and Service Canada centres across the country. Through public opinion research, we have confirmed that we have successfully raised awareness on elder abuse.

The results from a 2010 survey commissioned by Justice Canada on awareness and perceptions of elder abuse highlight the success of the awareness campaign. The report found that elder abuse awareness had increased by 11 percentage points since 2009 and that 9 out of 10 Canadians or 93% said that they were aware of the term “elder abuse”. These results speak for themselves demonstrating that this initiative has successfully fulfilled its mandate during its three-year mission.

While the initiative has come to a close, the Government of Canada remains committed to combatting elder abuse and building on the foundation created by the federal elder abuse initiative.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, seniors fear losing control over their finances and over their personal choices. Families and those with power of attorney can take control and take choice away and consequently take away dignity. Seniors can be forced into housing they do not want to move into. They can be told to hand over their finances. We allow this to happen for the sake of convenience or for our fears of a senior's safety. Yet older Canadians should have a say and should be allowed to determine the directions they wish to take. The emphasis here is that seniors want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

We have heard about the ad campaigns, but there needs to be action. Once again, what is the plan? What does the government have planned to ensure that seniors will have the opportunity and be able to maintain control over their own lives?

Dr. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada remains active in addressing elder abuse through the new horizons for seniors program which helps older Canadians use their leadership skills and energy to benefit communities across Canada. Budget 2010 proposed over \$10 million over two years to increase funding to the new horizons program for seniors.

In June 2011, the government launched a call for proposals under the recently enhanced new horizons program with elder abuse awareness included in the funding objectives.

As members of the House can see, the type of programming confirms the Government of Canada's ongoing commitment to combat elder abuse.

The recent throne speech also proposed tougher sentences for those who abuse seniors.

Canadian seniors have worked hard to build our country and our government is committed to supporting those seniors by combatting elder abuse in all its forms. Having underscored all of these actions, I believe our record speaks for itself.

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you back in this chamber at the start of another session.

I want to talk about an interesting and important subject near to me, which is the border. On June 13, I asked a question of the government with regard to the perimeter deal that is currently being constructed between Canada and the United States.

It is very important to acknowledge that there has been a number of recent border deals that have thickened the border. They did not provide the relief for time, travel and reduction of red tape. In fact, the United States has successfully created the northern border thickness based upon political movements in the south. This is unfortunate because it is costing us jobs, and the government has not done enough to challenge this attempt to thicken the border on the northern side.

Consultations are going on right now about the perimeter security deal that is being constructed. It would affect everything from immigration, our privacy, our military and a whole series of things. It would also affect our trade and our travel. As the United States is Canada's number one trading partner, we will see the loss of jobs.

I am concerned that the government has often been too willing to sign agreements that have actually not delivered in terms of the reduction of wait times or the red tape. I would point to one concern in terms of significance, and it is symbolic too because it has affected our tourism, which is that the government tore up a treaty that we had from the War of 1812, which it celebrated. What that did was allow gunboats on the Great Lakes again. We now have gunboats out there that fire 1,200 rounds a minute. I do not know what threat comes from Canada that requires 1,200 rounds a minute. These guns were used in Afghanistan and Cambodia. It is the Browning machine gun in particular.

That has had a cooling effect in terms of trade and tourism because people do not want to be around that stuff. Blackhawk helicopters have been added and a number of different dirigibles that do spying in Canada. Ironically, these things are not allowed to be used to spy in America, but they were being used to spy into Canada. The most famous one was in Sarnia. The people there went out to moon the balloon because they did not accept that there was a dirigible over top of their homes.

I have talked to a lot of businesses to put some pressure on the government. There should be some direct measureables about signing those agreements. We signed that shipwright agreement which now allows American boats to come into Canadian waters and arrest Canadian citizens. Interestingly enough, we are not even an equal partner in that particular program.

The Americans have their state police, their federal police, their customs officials and their municipal police who can now arrest Canadians, but when it comes to us, only our RCMP can reciprocate. Our own good men and women of the customs services are not treated to the same degree. We are not even in the same relationship at the same time.

I have asked the government to be more open and accountable, which means no longer just having a website to have hearings about the perimeter security. I am asking the government to conduct real parliamentary hearings and have oversight, not just website, one way announcements and a consultation. It is not acceptable when so much is at risk.

● (1850)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the United States share a remarkable history that greatly benefits both countries. We are each other's closest trading partners. In fact, our relationship is a model for the world.

Like all partnerships, ours must continue to evolve to address challenges and opportunities if it is to last and flourish. We share a common goal of keeping our borders open to commerce and closed to criminals and terrorists.

Adjournment Proceedings

On February 4, the Prime Minister and President Obama announced the Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness. This declaration marked a new long-term partnership between both countries and demonstrated a continued commitment to promote greater economic opportunity and to address threats as early as possible on both sides of the border.

Since being announced, we have been listening to the views of Canadians on this important initiative to ensure that Canada's interests are protected as we move forward.

In total, the government received input from more than 1,000 Canadians and almost 200 submissions from groups and organizations, including business groups, provinces and territories, municipalities, organized labour, civil society groups, academics and think tanks.

We reached out directly to national and regional groups and organizations, as well as border communities and first nations. A letter was also sent to every premier and territorial leader inviting provinces and territories to engage in the dialogue.

On August 29, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made public two reports on these consultations and, earlier today, these reports were tabled in the House for all members to review. The member opposite should review them.

The member speaks of a secretive process. This could not be further from the truth.

We thank the people and businesses who took the time to provide us with so much thoughtful input. These are important issues for Canada and Canadians and the overwhelming response we received makes this evident.

We will continue to work with President Obama and his administration to deliver on this initiative without compromising Canadian sovereignty.

Canadians elected a strong, stable, national majority Conservative government in May. They gave us a strong mandate to secure our economic recovery by protecting their interests and promoting their values.

Keeping our borders open to legitimate trade and travellers and closed to criminal and terrorist elements is vital in that regard.

I would think that the member opposite would want to join us in securing Canada's security and economic prosperity.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that every time an agreement has been signed we have had a thickening of the border

and the government has not contended. It has listened to Hillary Clinton, Lieberman and other elected officials run Canada's name down with regard to 9/11. At the same time, it has never challenged them on that and has allowed this myth to develop.

With regard to the process right now, it is done in a vacuum. It should be done in the public. The dialogue should be going back and forth between the different groups. It should not just be point and click on a website right now. A thousand people is not a lot when we consider our sovereignty and our personal privacy are at risk. In fact, the Privacy Commissioner has warned of the threats with regard to losing personal security.

As things currently stand, the government did nothing when the patriot act was introduced, and Canadian personal information is taken from us without our knowing if we have our data assembled in the United States, for example.

I would point to the fact that we need to have greater accountability because even the Rideau Institute has noted that personal privacy and a number of different issues will be at risk with regard to this deal. Why can it not happen in these chambers? Why can it not happen in the halls of Parliament where we actually have the parliamentary oversight of legislation that affects so many Canadians?

• (1855)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, our shared border plays a fundamental role in Canada's relationship with the United States and speeding up legitimate trade and travel is crucial in this regard, as is creating jobs and opportunities for Canadians and Americans alike.

The government received a great deal of valuable input from the public consultation process, as well as diverse views on many issues. These are important issues for Canada and Canadians, and the overwhelming response that we received makes this evident.

We are working with President Obama and his administration to streamline and secure our border and to enhance regulatory co-operation, ensuring that people and goods can flow freely and safely between our two countries.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:56 p.m.)

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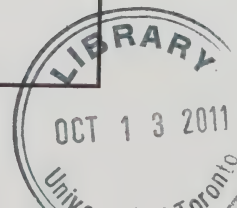
House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 016 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, September 20, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



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(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 20, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS

MEGA-QUARRY DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by a number of people from my riding.

The petitioners wish to draw the attention of all members of Parliament to the proposed mega-quarry in Melancthon Township in Dufferin County, Ontario. It would be the largest open-pit quarry in Canada at over 900 hectares, or 2,300 acres. The proposed mega-quarry would delve more than 60 metres, or 200 feet, deep, which is well below the water table. The proposed mega-quarry would threaten the headwaters of the Nottawasaga, Grand and Saugeen watershed systems and the Mad, Noisy, Pine and Boyne river sub-watersheds, consequently, detrimentally and permanently affecting the aquifers in the area of the proposed mega-quarry. The proposed mega-quarry would put at risk the drinking water of over one million Canadians. The proposed mega-quarry would threaten freshwater fish species, particularly in the Pine River, and would further harm freshwater fish species and their regeneration affecting Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. The proposed mega-quarry would remove from production some of Ontario's best farmland. The proposed mega-quarry would threaten the Grand and Nottawasaga river watersheds, including various freshwater fish species. The proposed mega-quarry

would threaten local flora and fauna, including species at risk like the bobolink, a small endangered blackbird. The proposed mega-quarry would initially see 150 truckloads of aggregates leaving the quarry per hour heading south, and 150 empty truckloads returning to the quarry, and other trucks transporting 52 tonnes of explosives to the quarry per day on local roadways not designed to carry such traffic.

Based on the proposed mega-quarry application, there are distinct issues relating to the use of water operations based on NAFTA considerations, which may have a very substantially negative financial implication federally and provincially.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to conduct an environmental assessment under the authority of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on the proposed Highland Companies' mega-quarry development.

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members that it is the practice not to read the entire petition but just to provide a brief summary thereof.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I bring to the House a petition from Manitobans concerned the Canadian Wheat Board.

As it was pointed out clearly yesterday, tens of thousands of prairie wheat farmers have sent a very strong message to the Conservative government that they do not want the Canadian Wheat Board to be dismantled. This is what this petition is about.

I would ask the government to respond to this petition.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1010)

*[English]***PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT**

The House resumed from September 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The last time the bill was before the House, the hon. member for Newton—North Delta had eight minutes left in debate.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to continue with the points I was making yesterday. Once again I want to express my concern that this piece of legislation is being presented under public safety when the bill actually deals with immigration and citizenship. This is a real issue. Since when have we as Canadians seen the arrival of immigrants in this country as a public safety issue? I urge the government to send this bill to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration as it goes through its committee stage.

Yesterday I mentioned very briefly the impact this legislation would have on families. We as Canadians pride ourselves on being compassionate and caring. The world looks to Canada to be compassionate and caring. People across the world choose to make Canada their home. I am a first generation immigrant. I came from England. I chose Canada to be my home. One of the reasons I chose Canada is its inclusivity and acceptance of people from around the world.

This legislation is going in the wrong direction. The legislation sends the wrong message to refugees. There are people who have spent years in war-torn territories running for their lives, separated from their families, not knowing where they will get their next meal. Some people do not even know where they are going to sleep the next night, whether they will wake up in the morning, or how many of their loved ones they will lose.

The legislation tells refugees that when they arrive in Canada it will take up to a year to examine their designations. During that time they will be in isolation and given a special designation for which the criteria are not clear at all. A lot of power seems to be vested in the minister and there seems to be a lot of smoke and mirrors in that we do not know the criteria. Once they have been designated they will not get to apply for permanent residence for five or six years.

This means the individuals who arrive here, who have already been torn from their families and have suffered enough, would not get travel documents. They would be able to work, but they would not have any rights. They would not have permanent residence. We would throw their lives into further turmoil and uncertainty for five or six years. They would not know if the families they left behind would ever be able to join them. They would not have the needed mental relief in knowing they have arrived in a safe haven. We must think about what that must feel like.

Imagine, for example, a young woman with two children who arrives here but her husband and two other kids are still back in Somalia. For six or seven years she cannot apply for permanent residence or for her family to join her. What are we saying to her? We are saying that we are going to provide her with this vacuum for five or six years, but she does not have any of the rights. She cannot apply for permanent residence. By the way, permanent residence does not take place the day someone applies for it. It takes time as well. Imagine the amount of time she will have to wait until the rest of her family can join her. It could take 10 to 15 years, depending on how we do the math.

● (1015)

Surely that is not the kind of image of Canada that we want to project to the world. We want the rest of the world to see us as compassionate and caring.

By creating two levels of refugees and denying appeals in that first year we are saying that we are prepared to break conventions governing the rights of refugees and the rights of children. That concerns me as a Canadian. I know Canadians right across this country will be concerned about that.

We pride ourselves on our family values. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming nation. I urge this House not to support this bill because we would be sending a message to the world that we are becoming a much colder, less caring nation when we see legislation such as this bill going through.

Let us see who is opposed to this legislation. There is the Canadian Council for Refugees. I talked to some of my constituents. When I phoned them they said, "This is ridiculous. It is not a problem." If we are worrying about smugglers, we already have a life sentence for smugglers. In Canada that is the highest penalty that can be given.

This is actually more punishment for people who have already suffered atrocities and difficulties that most of us in this chamber cannot even imagine.

As a counsellor I had the privilege of working with children who arrived here as refugees after spending years in detention camps or in very unsafe and volatile living conditions. Dealing with those children is extremely challenging. Now we are leaving those same children in a vacuum for five, six or seven years, maybe even longer.

The Canadian Council for Refugees is opposed to this legislation, as is Amnesty International. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has taken a position, as have the Canadian Bar Association and the Centre for Refugee Studies. What keeps coming up over and over again is that this bill is a draconian piece of legislation.

I urge all members to look at what it is we are trying to address. If we are trying to address the smugglers, let us focus on enforcement, provide extra resources and go after the smugglers. Let us not punish people who have already been victimized.

Let us all put ourselves in the position of a refugee. Let us imagine how we would feel reaching a safe haven called Canada and then being faced with detention and uncertainty.

I ask members to please defeat this bill.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising some of the very serious concerns that we in the NDP have about this bill.

I would like to ask the hon. member about another issue we have heard a lot about from people. Certainly as members of Parliament we deal with the process of appeals for humanitarian and compassionate applications. This is something we all are quite familiar with. It is an underpinning of the fairness of Canada's immigration and citizenship system.

Under this bill we know that designated persons would not be able to make such an application for five years. It is certainly removing a provision that normally has been part of the system, and has been there as a safeguard to ensure that legitimate applications based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds can come forward.

I would ask the member to comment on that. Also, does she think this bill is removing an element that has been very much a part of our system of evaluating applications and that compassionate and humanitarian grounds are very legitimate?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Madam Speaker, as Canadians we pride ourselves on fair, open and transparent processes. However, this legislation would establish a process whereby those who are designated would not have access to the appeal process. That is absolutely wrong. It goes against the very fabric of who we are as Canadians. It violates some international conventions on the rights of refugees. To detain refugees for a year as they await designation without access to an appeal process is disturbing and very un-Canadian. Is the first lesson we want to teach those who arrive here from volatile and dangerous conditions or war-torn countries that a world-respected country like Canada will not offer them an appeal process?

The fundamental problem with this legislation which purports to address human smuggling is that it does not address human smuggling. Human smuggling will continue. The only way to stop it is not by punishing the victims who have already suffered enough, but by providing funding and additional resources to enforcement agencies to help enforcement officers to do their job.

• (1020)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I checked yesterday's information because I am baffled by the government saying that as a developed, industrialized country we have provided more support for refugees than any other industrialized country. According to the minister, we will be accepting 14,000 refugees next year. However, according to Amnesty International's website, Germany and the United States each provides support for one-quarter of a million refugees.

Government Orders

I am baffled by this claim and I wonder if the member has any further information about it.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Madam Speaker, I will certainly be examining those figures more closely. This legislation is not about how many refugees will come to this country. Rather, it is about how we will treat those who land on our soil. Once again I want to focus on who we are as Canadians and how we wish to treat those people who have suffered through war, persecution and very difficult environments. We can all use numbers to confuse, but as parliamentarians we have a responsibility to ask ourselves from a humanitarian point of view what the bill is attempting to address.

Smugglers do not live on the boats or planes that transport refugees here. They are probably living very comfortable lives. This bill would not reduce the amount of money they charge people for transportation. Rather, it would lead to further persecution of victims. Let us enforce the excellent legislation and laws presently in place to target smugglers. We do not need this law against smugglers.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we all know where our hearts are on many of these issues and I share many of the thoughts and comments of the hon. member.

Coming back to what the bill should do, which is to deal with those involved in human smuggling, I would like to hear the member's suggestions and comments on what is required in order to discourage human smuggling and, most importantly, what kind of actions we should be taking.

• (1025)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Madam Speaker, what is key is the existing legislation. Rather than looking for a new kind of photo op and public safety issue where there is none, let us look at the existing law and enforce it. We have heard in the past that the enforcement agencies do not have enough staffing. Therefore, let us put additional resources in place to target those who are engaged in human smuggling instead of victims.

I absolutely believe that those who are engaged in these illegal activities need to be brought to justice by way of our judicial system. It is a good system with appropriate laws in place. The maximum sentence for human smuggling is life imprisonment, the highest punishment conferred in Canada. In that context, let us concentrate on enforcement by targeting where smugglers live and how they operate. To detain refugees once they arrive in Canada is draconian.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Newton—North Delta for her excellent and very relevant speech.

My question has to do with the provisions of the bill that prevent refugees from appealing to the appropriate authorities. We know what happened. Yesterday, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism made reference to Australia. But in Australia, the supreme court intervened and invalidated the provisions that prevented refugees from appealing.

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What does my colleague think about these provisions in Canada? Does she think that they could also be invalidated by the Supreme Court of Canada?

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Madam Speaker, in Australia the appeal process was overruled. If this bill passes as is, I expect that it will be overturned here as well.

As Canadians, we respect international law and have signed many United Nations conventions. Therefore, it makes no sense to attempt to put legislation in place that we know will be overturned. It would be akin to giving oneself a black eye, which makes no sense.

I question the purpose of the bill and why it comes under public safety. This is an immigration and citizenship issue. However, the government is putting it forward as a public safety issue. Let us look at it for what it is rather than tarnish our reputation in the eyes of the international community.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-4 today. However, as this is my first time rising in the House since the election in May, I would like to take one moment to thank the voters of Burlington for sending me back here with 54% of the vote. It was a very nice election.

I want to congratulate all members, whether new or returning to the House. As well, I believe it is important to welcome the pages who are just starting out this week. Remembering everyone's names and idiosyncrasies is a tough job. They do a great job and I thank them. I hope they have a great year.

I am pleased to stand in the House today to speak in support of the bill. It will go a long way to making our nation safer by cracking down on the illegal and dangerous activity of human smuggling. The Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act is a critical piece of legislation that responds to a critical need.

The smuggling of people is not a new crime. In fact, it has been happening around the world for many decades. I am sure all hon. members have heard stories of people paying a fee to bypass legal and proper immigration processes to sneak across the Mexico-United States border.

My riding of Burlington is not that far from the U.S. border, and on a weekly basis a number of people come to see me regarding the issue of crossing the border illegally.

When I was first elected, I was amazed that individuals in discussing with me how they came to Canada eventually would admit that they got here illegally. They did not follow the legal process. They claimed refugee status when they arrived at the border. Then they would come to my office because they wanted me as their MP to help them continue the illegal process they had started.

Out of respect for the office I hold as a member of Parliament, I told those individuals that I would not interfere in any illegal activity that they had undertaken. I instructed them to follow the legal and appropriate processes to immigrate to Canada, under the refugee system and the immigration system. Often we would call those people a few weeks later to determine what they had decided to do, but they would be hard to find and in some cases we could not find

them at all. It does happen. It happens in Burlington. It happens across this country and has been happening for many years.

It may come as a surprise to some that this problem is not new to Canada. Every year thousands of people seeking asylum try to enter Canada illegally by air or by land through the help of organized criminal smuggling networks.

As well, illegal immigration by sea is not new to Canada. In 1999, close to 600 immigrants from China's Fujian province arrived on Canada's west coast in four different vessels. What has changed is that Canadians are aware now of the direct impact this criminal activity is having on our nation. Canadians have received a wake-up call that Canada is being increasingly targeted by organized human smugglers based out of Southeast Asia who view our immigration system as a very generous system to be exploited for profit.

Two events in recent years have served to raise the profile of this issue in the minds of Canadians. One is the ship that recently came to British Columbia. My constituents have been asking what we will do to stop this from happening in the future.

Last August, 492 Sri Lankan Tamils arrived in British Columbia aboard the vessel the *MV Sun Sea*. This occurred less than one year after the arrival of the *MV Ocean Lady*, which carried 76 Sri Lankan Tamils.

These two events are an issue in my riding. Although we are in Burlington, thousands of miles away from where the activities took place, Burlingtonians and all Canadians are concerned about how we could allow those events to happen.

• (1030)

While these two vessels landed on the west coast, this is an issue that, as I said, extends across the country. In the past, Canadian border authorities have also dealt with cases of human smuggling in eastern Canada, including at the Port of Montreal.

This is a growing transnational issue that threatens our national security. It also raises significant concerns regarding human rights and the rule of law here in Canada.

These human smugglers are making huge profits by promoting illegal immigration. They are not immigration consultants. They are not helping people with the actual process. They are taking thousands of dollars from individuals and putting them on inappropriate ships and sending them to countries, including Canada, where they think they can get away with bypassing the immigration system. They are charging individuals large sums of money to transport them to a country and advising them to claim asylum, refugee status, when they arrive. This unlawful activity has implications for our country. Ultimately, it affects our system and all Canadians across this country.

I am sure that hon. members can well imagine how conducting identity and admissibility examinations of over 500 individuals arriving on a single boat can significantly tax our immigration and border security systems. Let us be frank about it: we are not set up for mass immigration or mass asylum seekers in that format.

Sadly, the costs of human smuggling to society are more than can be measured on balance sheets. Often this illegal transport means great misery, illness and even death for many of the individuals involved, who are transported thousands of miles in very unsafe conditions.

This was clearly seen in the terrible events that occurred off the coast of Australia's Christmas Island in December of last year. Thirty people lost their lives when a wooden boat operated by suspected human smugglers was destroyed in stormy weather. The Christmas Island example in Australia is just one of many incidents that have happened around the world.

Further, human smuggling is fundamentally unfair to those who follow the rules and wait their turn to come to Canada, which we all see in our offices. We all sympathize with those who are following the rules and are trying to become Canadian immigrants by following the legal procedure.

I am a sixth or seventh generation Canadian, but my in-laws came here from Italy. They came through the legal route. They had to wait their turn to get here. They followed the process. They did not come on a boat and claim refugee status after paying a smuggler thousands of dollars to escape from Italy. They followed the rules. They expect everyone else to follow the rules. They welcome immigrants, obviously. In my family, particularly through marriage; people in my in-laws' family are almost all immigrants. They have been very successful. Canada has been good to them. Canada is the better for their arrival and their contribution, but they did it the legal way, and that is what this bill is about.

Canada welcomes thousands of new immigrants and refugees every year through one of the most generous and fair refugee systems in the world, but when Canada is forced to deal with the arrival of a vessel filled with hundreds of illegal migrants, the resulting backlog of work means that those who go through the proper immigration channels get pushed back in line. This is not fair to them, their children or their spouses.

We will not stand idly by while criminal organizations target our country and our generosity. That is why our government took action in October of last year and first introduced this legislation to send a clear message to human smugglers that Canada will not tolerate them. That is why we have reintroduced this legislation in this session. We believe that the passing of this bill cannot come soon enough.

This issue is not going to go away. We must act now. We must be responsible parliamentarians.

• (1035)

With this legislation we are taking firm and reasonable action to defend the integrity of our borders. We are determined to protect our immigration and refugee system from abuse and to prosecute human smugglers to the full extent of the law.

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While Canadians are, by and large, supportive of a generous and open immigration and refugee system, we also understand that every sovereign country has a responsibility to protect its citizens and the integrity of its borders. This bill clearly shows that we will not tolerate abuse of our immigration system, either by human smugglers or by those unwilling to abide by the rules. At the same time, it will allow us to continue offering protection to legitimate refugees.

The new legislation will enable the Minister of Public Safety to declare the arrival of a group of persons as an "irregular arrival" and make those involved subject to the bill's measures. The bill recognizes the gravity of this decision by stating in clear terms that only the Minister of Public Safety can make this decision and that it cannot be delegated to another official.

The legislation will also make it easier to prosecute human smugglers, establish mandatory minimum prison sentences for those who are convicted of human smuggling, and hold shipowners and operators to account for the use of their ships in human smuggling operations. This bill reduces the attraction of coming to Canada by way of an illegal smuggling operation.

The legislation contains measures to prevent those who come to Canada as part of an irregular arrival, including those who subsequently obtain refugee status, from applying for permanent resident status for a period of at least five years, including those who obtain that refugee status.

We want to enhance the opportunity to rescind the refugee status and remove from Canada those who return to their country of origin for a vacation or who demonstrate in any other way that they are not legitimately in need of Canada's protection. We must prevent individuals who come to Canada as part of a designated human smuggling operation from sponsoring family members for a period of up to five years.

Many of Canada's global allies and partners have found themselves the target of organized human smuggling ventures. This is an international problem, and it must have an international solution. No nation can solve illegal smuggling by acting purely on its own. That is why we have appointed a special adviser on human smuggling and illegal migration, Mr. Ward Alcock, to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to this issue. Mr. Alcock's role allows us to engage other international partners with a common voice to find ways to prevent these vessels from departing from their home country in the first place.

Since his appointment in October of 2010, Mr. Alcock has met with officials in Australia and a number of other states in southeast Asia, as well as with representatives at the United Nations, to discuss approaches to managing irregular immigration that is happening around the world. He has also attended several meetings of the Bali process, which is a regional forum that brings together more than 50 countries and international organizations that are developing practical measures to combat human smuggling and related crimes in the South Pacific region.

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Adding weight to this international discussion, the Prime Minister has urged leaders from the APAC nations to work together to find concrete solutions to the problem of human smuggling. Last fall, the Prime Minister met with international allies at the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum highlighting the critical need for stronger and more effective laws to crack down on this global problem. This ongoing collaboration is critical to shutting down human smuggling operations and will send a very strong message to would-be smugglers that their illegal activities will no longer be tolerated.

• (1040)

The measures we are introducing today will substantially improve our ability to crack down on those who engage in the illegal activity of human smuggling. These measures respect our international obligations and commitments that provide assistance and sanctuary for those who are legitimate refugees and who need our protection. Canada opens its doors to make sure they have the quality of life and opportunity that they all deserve so that they are able to start a new and better life here.

We call on all hon. members to support this legislation and help us pass this act as soon as possible.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would ask the hon. member for Burlington how the bill would address the human smugglers' criminal activities and how it would prosecute them.

• (1045)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question and I congratulate her on her election to the House.

I will use an analogy that will make the point.

Those who are active in illegal activity, whether human smuggling or other illegal activity, need customers to be able to provide this illegal activity. In this case, the human smugglers look at Canada as a place where they can bypass all the rules. They look at Canada as a place where they can get people in to claim asylum; Canada will treat them like gold, and there will be no issue. Therefore, if they pay the \$10,000 or whatever it is, the smuggler will get them here, and they will be fine. Of course, the smugglers do not live here. They live in their own countries.

With this legislation we would make Canada's borders less like a doormat. We would let the global community know that we have a system that gives fair treatment to true refugees who come through a legitimate process but that we will not tolerate boatloads of illegal, illegitimate refugees coming from human smugglers. This would take away the opportunity for the human smugglers to use Canada as a doormat. It would discourage them from putting together boats of people to come to Canada. That is what this legislation does. That is how it would tackle human smugglers who are the core of the problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not think that the hon. member opposite answered the previous question from the NDP member, who asked what, exactly, the government was doing about the criminals who exploit these immigrants to bring them here.

In my opinion, this bill still goes after the victims instead of those who traffic these immigrants. The bill requires some major amendments. In addition, I believe that the entire bill still focuses more on criminals than on victims. The government wants to invest money in prisons and give additional penalties, but what will it do for victims in terms of support, follow-up and assistance?

I wonder whether the member would agree to split this bill into several parts, so that we can examine the many provisions that it contains. I think most of us would agree on half of the measures in this bill. There are some very good measures, but some are unacceptable, especially those that affect Quebec's traditional values and that go completely against what the Government of Quebec and Quebec society have always advocated.

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on his re-election. I believe he is the longest-serving member in the House.

The answer is, no, I do not think we are interested in splitting up the bill. It is a package and it works better as a package to discourage human smugglers from using Canada as a place to deploy illegitimate refugees.

The last point was about the values of Quebecers. I believe the values of Quebecers are the same values as all other Canadians, whether they live in British Columbia, Burlington or Nova Scotia, and their values are about fairness. A fundamental piece of our immigration and refugee system is fairness and appropriateness for those who are coming here through the legitimate system that exists. We have a generous and well-respected immigration and refugee process that is recognized around the world and it is fair. What is happening is that human smugglers are trying to take advantage of the system and circumvent it. Whether one is a Quebecer, an Ontarian or a British Columbian, people think it is fair. This legislation puts fairness first and foremost in our immigration and refugee system.

• (1050)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member opposite suggested that this bill was somehow fair. If I were a refugee, it would not matter to me how I got here but it matters to the government how a person gets here. If the government decides that refugees got here by a method it did not like, such as having to pay somebody to travel, a method that has been used for centuries to come to North America, how does it decide that it is fair to treat refugees who it deems to be illegal different from refugees it decides are legal? How is it fair that there are two classes of refugees, both of whom are equally refugees?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, in his question he answered his own question. Do most Canadians not think it is fair that the legal process that is available in that country is followed? That is what fairness is. It is taking the legal route. Is it fair that we put criminals in jail if they do something illegal? Just because they do it illegally, do we not treat them fairly?

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We have a system that treats legal refugee claimants fairly. Why would we bend the rules of our legal system for those who come here illegally and turn a blind eye to it? Do we say, "They got here illegally. So what?" That is not fair to the thousands and thousands of immigrants who come here through legal channels and the legal refugee process. That is what fairness is. That is why this legislation brings fairness to our system, continues to treat refugees fairly and goes after human smugglers who are trying to use Canada as a doormat.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the vast majority of Canadians, I am sure we all agree, believe very strongly in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country. The issue of arbitrary detention for very long periods of time is extremely troubling. We do not subscribe to that approach as it is being proposed in Bill C-4 and as the member for Burlington has talked about.

I would like to ask a very practical question. What happens if somebody is detained for an extremely long period of time because he or she is suspected of being a smuggler and it turns out that the person is a perfectly legitimate refugee? Is there any kind of compensation accorded to that person?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, the answer is, no. Those who are coming here are detained for up to a year or until there is a determination that they are legitimate refugees, which could happen sooner than a year. The process is simple.

The vast majority of calls from people in my riding wanted us to ensure that these people were legitimate refugees. This legislation addresses that issue by having a detention process where these refugees are not travelling across the country where we do not know where they are, but that we keep them in place until we determine whether they are legitimate refugees. It is the appropriate thing to do. It is the fair thing to do. This is the right legislation for this kind of human smuggling.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Speeches will now be 10 minutes each and will be followed by five minutes of questions.

The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first congratulate the member for Burlington on his election victory. I am glad his leader finally allowed him to speak his mind six months after his victory. I hope to hear from him sooner rather than later but I guess that is for his leader to decide.

I will speak to this bill, first, to express my concerns with its shortcomings and then, to suggest to the members opposite some of the ways the government may be able to improve it.

Chief among my concerns are the effects this bill will have on children and their families. My second concern is with the effect that this bill will result in wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars on a non-existent problem and the negative effects this bill will have on our economy.

I am a family man. My daughter is a priority for me. One of the reasons I serve in this House is so she may grow up in a better world

and have a better life. It is something I wish for all children, not just for my own and not just for Canadian children. I am sure there are many members in this House who have similar wishes and who wish for the well-being of children.

As members know, our country is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This month, we celebrated the 21st anniversary of its ratification. It is an important document because it outlines the international consensus of basic rights of children. So, it is with great worry that I see that Bill C-4 may jeopardize our commitment to this important convention.

I do not want to believe that the government would detain children for up to a year just because the children were trying to flee the most dire circumstances, whether it be war, famine or persecution. Unfortunately, Bill C-4 would result in the detention of children. I think many Canadians will feel shameful when they learn that our government intends to detain children, regardless of their country of origin. Perhaps the government intends to build detention centres so Canadians will not be able to see its actions in this respect. Simply put, the detention of children that would result from this bill is not acceptable and runs contrary to Canadian values.

I will outline how the government would be in violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I would like to explain a bit about this convention to the members opposite and to whom it applies.

Article 1 of the convention states:

For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

The Conservative government often likes to speak of the age of consent in its care for children. This convention applies to all people aged zero to eighteen.

Bill C-4 would put us in contravention of Article 2 of the convention, which states:

States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Subsection (2) states:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Bill C-4 would create two classes of refugee claimants with a different set of rights. In effect, the bill would discriminate against children who will fall under the category of "designated claimants". This is in clear violation of Article 2 of the convention.

Bill C-4 would put us in contravention of Article 3 of the convention, which states:

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In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

I think it is quite clear and obvious to the members opposite that this implies that refugee children must be treated in the same way we would treat our own children. I think members would also agree that they would not accept the detention of their own children, especially if their children were fleeing a war-torn area.

• (1055)

Bill C-4 would violate article 7(2) of the convention that states:

States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.

Even if Bill C-4 had provisions for children to be detained, it would be difficult for the government to fulfill its obligations to the convention with its detention centres because of article 31, the right to play, and article 39, the right to psychological and physical recovery of child victims, which states:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

It would mean that children would need to be provided with acceptable play areas, areas for cultural expression, access to psychological and counselling services and services that cater to the child's development. It is fine for the Prime Minister to use the UN to justify things like going to war, for his international position and beliefs on foreign affairs, yet reject a convention made by the same body to which we were signatory.

It is all fine and dandy to promote child and maternal health, except when the child and mother are refugees. We will have to build state-of-the-art facilities with play areas, educational opportunities, office spaces for the teams of psychologists and educators and medical staff.

This brings me to my second point, which is the costs incurred as a result of this ideologically piece of legislation.

Has the government factored in how much new detention facilities would cost? Did the government just think it could detain children, without fulfilling its obligations to the convention? Let us remind the government of its duties and obligations in this matter. Article 22(1) reads as follows:

States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

Article 22(2) states:

For this purpose, States Parties shall provide, as they consider appropriate, co-operation in any efforts by the United Nations and other competent intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations co-operating with the United Nations to protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other members of the family of any refugee child in order to obtain information necessary for reunification with his or her family. In cases where no parents or other members of the family can be found, the child shall be accorded the same protection as any

other child permanently or temporarily deprived of his or her family environment for any reason, as set forth in the present Convention.

Rather than punish the victims, we should show compassion and help them integrate into our society. I remind members across to look at what happened in 1979 and 1980 when over 50,000 Vietnamese people arrived on our shores by boat. These refugees came from a war-torn nation that was considered an enemy of our neighbours. From listening to media reports of the day not everyone was happy with their arrival, yet the progressive government of that day showed leadership in helping the refugees integrate. The Vietnamese Canadian community have been vibrant players in Canada's economy. We have two members within our caucus who come from this community, the member for Brossard—La Prairie and the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

I pause to think how low we have sunk with this terrible legislation.

• (1100)

The bill only drives home the fact that the Conservatives have given up the "progressive" label and that they fail when it comes to progressive leadership. Instead of integrating, they are saying that people have to wait five years. Instead of welcoming these people, they are detaining them and children.

We should actually love our neighbours, not fear them. We should provide, within this legislation, a part where children and their families will be able to apply for humanitarian and compassionate exceptions.

The legislation, as it is written, is not acceptable. It should be referred back to committee to be altered.

• (1105)

The Deputy Speaker: I should inform the hon. member that there was an error in calculation. He did have the full 20 minutes for his intervention. I regret that he may have felt rushed. If he has any additional comments that he wishes to make, he officially still has eight minutes left.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: That is okay Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comment, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this issue of having a Canadian law that will require jailing children of potential refugee claimants in Canada, the entire family, man, woman and child to be kept in detention for a full year, with only one review by the minister, is one of the most egregious parts of this so-called human smuggling legislation, which I now refer to as the "anti-refugee law".

As long as we keep calling it human smuggling legislation, we allow it to continue under disguise. It is actually anti-refugee legislation.

I want put for the hon. member the scenario of the MV *St. Louis* in 1939 in Halifax Harbour. Under our current laws, Captain Gustav Schroeder, who bravely took money and brought Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany to our shores, would be jailed for life. That is already Canadian law; that is not in this bill. Further, all 937 German Jewish refugees would be kept in internment for a year in Canada.

I accept that the hon. members from the government benches said yesterday that this would be far preferable to being sent back to death camps in Nazi Germany, but I really do not think that is how Canadians want to treat refugees who come to our shores, putting men, women and children in jail for a year.

Could the hon. member expand on how he sees the bill affecting the children of refugee families?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Madam Speaker, we can see that the effect of detaining children and families would be terrible.

Imagine something happening in Canada where all of a sudden we had a natural disaster or some form of persecution causing Canadians to flee to another country. Then when they arrived at that country, they were not welcomed and integrated. Rather they were protected from the people of that country through detention because the public opinion there had been turned against all outsiders.

I imagine the feeling of those families would be terrible. It would terribly psychologically damaging on those families, especially on their children. There are documented medical and physiological effects of child refugees who are not integrated or welcomed. There are serious physiological effects and psychological repercussions, PTSD, and all sorts of things that make it very difficult on a child's personal development. It is not in the best interests of the child. When that child eventually does integrate into society, extra care will be needed, which will take up resources.

Why do we not start from point zero, helping these families integrate into our society rather than pushing them away?

• (1110)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Vaudreuil-Soulanges for speaking about detaining children. In addition to subjecting children to completely arbitrary detention, this bill, Bill C-4, would negatively and permanently affect their development. Allow me to elaborate.

I have here a 2004 study from the Australian Human Rights Commission. It states that detaining children and adolescents has negative effects on their development and that the repercussions worsen with longer detention. Effects include anxiety, suicidal thoughts, self-harming behaviour—including self-mutilation—and lifelong post-traumatic stress. These are but a few examples of the major effects and problems that children can experience.

As my colleague said, my parents arrived as refugees with the boat people in 1979. If Bill C-4 had been in effect then, my two brothers, then one and three, would likely have been detained for an indefinite period—at least a year if not more—and these catastrophic effects would have permanently affected their development.

In addition, Bill C-4 is unfair. I would like my colleague to explain why arriving by boat is different. That is what the Conservatives are condemning. They want to penalize, for a second or third time, people who arrive here, legitimately seeking refugee protection. Yet we are putting extra pressure on them and they are being slapped with an inappropriate label. How does the member for

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Vaudreuil-Soulanges think this discrimination could affect these refugees?

[English]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Madam Speaker, the member is completely within reason. The fact is this legislation would have the effect of institutionalizing racism in our refugee system.

When I listened to the media reports during the 1979-80 arrival of the boat people from Vietnam, people on call-in shows said that those people did not belong here, that they were not Canadian, that they should wait their turn and that they were jumping the queue. The government of Joe Clark showed courage and compassion. It showed great values of welcoming these refugees. It even put resources overseas in Vietnam to process people coming here within a two-week period, not a five-year period or a one-year period. We are talking about 50,000 people who were processed in a period of two years and the government of the day processed them within two weeks, with limited resources and staff. Yet the current government says that it cannot do it and that it will not let queue-jumpers come here.

In effect, what it is doing is institutionalizing racism in our country, and I find that extremely disserving.

The Deputy Speaker: At this point, the time for 20 minute speeches has elapsed and we will revert to 10 minute speeches and 5 minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Westlock—St. Paul.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the House and to see you in the chair once again.

Before I start my comments, I want to say that it has always been a Conservative government, whenever in power, that has led the way in welcoming immigrants and helping bring them into our society and country, and breaking colour barriers when it has come to the first members of Parliament of different origins. We in this Conservative government are proud of our history when it comes to this, and we stand by that history.

It is my great pleasure to stand in the House today in support of this important piece of legislation. I have listened with great interest to the debate in the House today over the Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act.

However, the conversation has not been confined to the House, and nor should it be. This is an issue that has sparked much interest and discussion among Canadians and our global allies and partners. Last summer, it was one of the predominant issues in my riding.

Hon. members have heard much about this legislation over the course of these debates and they have had much to say about it. But it is important to take a step back, get past the rhetoric and fear-mongering and remind ourselves of the seriousness of this crime and why we must take measures to address it.

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The United Nations defines human smuggling, or migrant smuggling, in the following way:

The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.

Simply put, it is the act of bringing people illegally from one nation to another for profit, often in the holds of ships or cramped containers.

Most disturbing is the fact that no one fully knows accurately the number of people who are smuggled each and every year. The data are scattered and incomplete. There are some things, however, that we do know.

We know there are intricate networks of human smugglers around the globe willing and able to help migrants evade national border controls, migration regulations and visa requirements. They do not do this out of the kindness of their hearts or out of a desire to help these individuals; human smugglers do their work in the name of profit and greed.

We know that human smuggling is a highly profitable business with a fairly low risk of detection and punishment. That makes it increasingly attractive to organized criminal syndicates that work transnationally, across borders and regions.

One of the great attractions to this type of crime is its low overhead costs, with no regulations or safeguards necessary to ensure the safety of the migrants who are smuggled. The more profit these smugglers make, the more brazen they become and the more risks they are willing to take with the lives of their passengers.

We also know that human smugglers are very opportunistic and flexible. They constantly change their routes and their methods to avoid capture.

Most important, we know that this problem can only be addressed with a coordinated, multifaceted approach among our global allies and partners. This is why Canada, along with more than 100 other countries, is signatory to various international conventions and protocols that condemn human smuggling and aim to protect legitimate asylum seekers.

Human smuggling is a problem that affects virtually every nation in the world, either as a country of origin, transit or destination.

Until a few years ago, most Canadians were either unaware of this criminal activity or perhaps believed that it was a crime that happened far away from our borders. That was until we received a sobering wake-up call when two vessels arrived on our west coast within a year of each other. The *MV Ocean Lady* arrived in 2009 carrying 76 immigrants. The *MV Sun Sea* arrived less than a year later carrying almost 500 migrants.

The reaction of most Canadians was swift. In an Angus Reid poll shortly after the *MV Sun Sea* arrived, almost half of the Canadians surveyed said they believed that all passengers and crew should be deported, even if they were found to have no links to terrorism. That is a telling number and, quite frankly, one we cannot ignore.

Does this mean that Canadians have suddenly become intolerant or hateful toward immigrants? Not at all. Canadians are proud of our

welcoming and diverse multicultural society. What Canadians are telling us, however, is that they are outraged that human smuggling syndicates are exploiting Canada's fair and generous immigration system to make a quick profit. They share our government's grave concerns that Canada will continue to be a magnet for these irregular arrivals unless we do something now. These concerns are not unfounded.

• (1115)

We continue to hear stories of possible ships headed to Canada. As recently as July, we learned that Indonesian authorities had stopped a ship filled with migrants that may have been destined for our shores.

There is no time to waste. We must send a clear message to these human smugglers that Canada will not tolerate their abusing our immigration system. Furthermore, we will not tolerate the threat that human smuggling poses to our national security. It can be very difficult to establish the identities of smuggled migrants, many of whom come with no documentation whatsoever.

When faced with facts, it is clear that the Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act cannot come soon enough. With this legislation we are taking firm, reasonable actions to defend the integrity of our borders, protect our immigration and refugee system from abuse, and prosecute human smugglers to the fullest extent of the law.

This legislation will strengthen our legal response to irregular arrivals in several crucial respects. It will give our immigration and law enforcement officials more time to identify and investigate individuals who are part of an irregular arrival. We believe that mandatory detention for up to one year is necessary and reasonable to allow for a thorough investigation of individuals who decide to arrive en masse.

This legislation will also enhance the ability of law enforcement officials to identify and engage human smuggling ventures. This includes establishing minimum jail sentences for convicted smugglers and extending the time period under which these offenders can and will be prosecuted. It will allow us to hit smugglers where they feel it most, in their pocketbooks. For example, it would amend the Marine Transportation Security Act to increase the penalties for owners and operators of vessels who fail to provide passenger information before entering Canadian waters; who refuse to comply with a ministerial direction to leave or not enter Canadian waters; or who provide false or misleading information to Canadian officials. Stiffer consequences, stiffer fines and stiffer sentences will send a message to human smugglers that we will not sit idly while they target our borders and our country, whether by sea, land, or air.

In fact, our work does not begin and end with our own borders. We are working closely with our international partners to prevent these criminal ventures from departing for Canada.

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This legislation sends a clear message, that Canada is a fair and generous and welcoming country for those who want to work for a better life, but there are legal and legitimate ways that must be followed to do so. These measures will substantially enhance our ability to crack down on those who engage in human smuggling, and these respect our international obligations and commitments to provide assistance and sanctuary for those refugees who need our protection and help to start a better life.

Our government will continue to push ahead with our goal of passing this important bill to ensure the security and safety of Canadians, and to protect the rights of refugees who are following the proper legal steps to make Canada their home.

I call on all hon. members to support swift passage of this legislation.

• (1120)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, does the member opposite actually believe that human smugglers will read *Hansard* and Canadian legislation before collecting money from desperate people who are fleeing strife and war-torn countries and persecution? What measures does this legislation take to prevent the actual smugglers working overseas? What can Canada do to get the smugglers who are overseas collecting the money in other countries?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, this is about profit, this is about greed, this is about the selfishness of these human smugglers. Of course, they are going to go to places where they have the best chance of abusing the system.

This legislation is about fairness, it is about reasonableness, it is about making sure that Canada is not used as a doormat and a target for these human smugglers.

Of course, they are going to go to where it is most profitable for themselves, and this legislation helps make Canada not one of those targeted countries.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a former immigration minister, I look at my colleagues across the way and I feel like the Tea Party is a watered-down version of them, considering what they are trying to pass here today. It is appalling that anyone would try to label people who are already victims.

First of all, the extraterritoriality of this bill cannot even be enforced. If the goal is prevention, we should enter into an international treaty, which would allow all countries to attack the vultures directly and would avoid labelling these would-be refugees.

My question is very, very simple. Can the member tell me if the government sought a legal opinion that confirms that this bill is not unconstitutional?

[English]

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, in fact, Canada is working with over 100 other countries to ensure not only that Canada is not a target but also that certain other countries are not destination points, and to help other countries that are origin points. It is important that we take a global, holistic approach to this to make sure that we do the right thing.

My hon. colleague across the way was the Liberal Party's lieutenant in Quebec during that party's decline in the last several years in the province. I am surprised that he does not realize the position of the people of Quebec and the people of Canada when it comes to this reasonable and fair approach to refugees and asylum seekers.

• (1125)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, could the government member opposite provide any empirical evidence for the repeated claim that Canada is being targeted? Most refugees around the world seek asylum in other countries of the developing world and Canada receives a very small proportion of the world's refugees.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, I am disappointed that her question was so brief.

I do not know about empirical evidence, but I have seen the pictures and can point to the ships that we have confiscated and that are sitting in Canadian harbours and show that Canada is in fact a target for those in other countries.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to quickly come back to a comment made by my colleague across the floor. He said that human trafficking presents a minimal risk. This raises the question as to why they are introducing even more arbitrary and draconian bills, when instead we could be enforcing existing measures better to end human trafficking, without penalizing refugees.

[English]

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, I can assure everyone that I did not say that human smuggling was minimal, nor did I in any way mitigate the importance of this piece of legislation.

I understand that the hon. member may not have been in the chamber representing constituents last summer when this was such a huge issue across the country.

I believe the approach that the Government of Canada is taking is a fair, reasonable and tough action to prevent abuse of Canada's immigration system by human smugglers.

We had a strong mandate given to us in May of this year to take action such as this, and I can say that constituents in my riding were appalled at the games that the NDP and Liberal Party played in the last Parliament on this legislation. It is time to take real steps to get something done on this.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be part of the debate on Bill C-4, for which, in the spirit of my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I propose the short title to be "the refugee punishment act".

I would start by posing the context for the bill. It is not coming forward from the Conservative government in isolation. It is part of a larger movement that the Conservative government is promoting to create a more punitive society in Canada. It is this movement that so many Canadians are unhappy with, and the reason the vast majority of Canadians did not vote for the Conservative government.

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To put it in perspective, Canada has a long and proud history of making itself a better country and of governments being in the lead. We had governments that were committed to Canada having a just society, a society in which people had equal opportunity and where human rights and individual rights were respected no matter what corner of Canada a person came from.

We have also had a movement towards an inclusive society, one whereby Canada was part of the international family of nations and a country that would welcome people from other countries who wanted to come to Canada to build their lives and succeed and contribute to Canada. The idea of an inclusive society also incorporated Canada's acceptance of a share of the most vulnerable refugees from other countries.

The Liberals have a movement towards a sustainable society. That is one through which we leave Canada in as good a shape as it was, or better, environmentally as well as socially and economically.

These are important movements that government provides leadership on. They create the character of Canada, the nation we are so proud of and a nation the rest of the world respects.

I see a Conservative government across the aisle moving towards a punitive society, a society based on raising fears, anger and resentment among its people. It is one based on pitting one group against another in fear or resentment. We have seen any number of initiatives that are slowly building the platform for a more punitive society, and I am sad about that. I regret that Canada is going backwards with this movement towards a more punitive society, and that is what the bill is all about.

Yesterday the immigration minister summed up what the bill was about. He said it was about a disincentive for smuggling. What does a disincentive for smuggling mean with the way the bill is laid out?

It does not mean working with the international community to prevent smuggling. It does not mean identifying who is profiting from it and working to stop them from exploiting refugees. No, the disincentive would be punishing the victims so harshly that refugees would think twice about Canada being a safe harbour in their time of greatest need. That is not the Canada we want to create.

We recognize the mistakes that Canada has made in the past. One example was the horrible breach of humanity in turning away the *St. Louis* and its German-Jewish refugees. That is a recognition that we are a Canada that has a humanitarian responsibility towards refugees. However, this bill is about punishing refugees as a disincentive to smugglers, and I take great exception to that approach to public policy in our country.

I join the Liberal Party and other members in wanting a government that would hit hard against those who profit from human misery, terrorism, exploitation and those who would take the most vulnerable in their time of need and make money from it.

• (1130)

Of course we want to crack down on that. Of course we want to protect Canadians from unscrupulous smugglers. However, this bill is not one that does that.

Already provisions exist against smugglers, and no further resources are provided by the bill to actually put into effect the provisions we have in our laws to impose life imprisonment or huge fines on those who are caught smuggling.

The bill is not an effective way to accomplish the objective of cracking down on smuggling. The bill is about punishing refugees. Unfortunately, in its process and content, it feeds cynicism, it is sowing conflict and it undermines compassion for human beings at the most vulnerable times in their lives.

The Liberals support pragmatic evidence-based solutions to human smuggling. We certainly do not support this re-victimization of the refugees by punishing the most vulnerable.

I want to talk about my assertion that the bill feeds cynicism. Several members have quoted polls showing that Canadians would just as soon turn back boats like the *Sun Sea* and the ones that came to the shores of British Columbia a year ago or two years ago. They would just as soon turn them back.

How cynical, because it is the government's own comments that stoked the fears, the anger and the resentment that were then reflected in the polls. The comments of the Prime Minister and the immigration minister linked refugees fleeing for their lives to terrorism and to illegitimacy. It was those kinds of comments that the polls were reflecting. To stoke those fears, then poll the public, and then use the results to justify this bill to punish refugees is just the highest political cynicism that one can imagine.

The bill did not see a public consultation. Were the various parties involved in thinking about how we can actually crack down on smuggling? There was no consultation, because this is a bill to gain political advantage by stoking fear, anger and resentment among Canadians. That is what the bill is all about, so why would the government consult on it? Making people afraid, coming up with a supposed solution, and then garnering some votes is the height of cynicism, and the Conservative government specializes in it.

Because of the absence of public consultation, the bill is unlikely to survive the charter challenge. That is because it creates two classes of refugees and because it likely flouts international law, but that is not an impediment to the members opposite, because they will use this as part of that larger platform toward a punishment agenda, a punitive society based on fear.

Canadians deserve better than that. They deserve thoughtful public policy that really goes to the root of the problem and genuinely attempts to improve Canadians' lives through public policy that shows leadership, not just petty partisanship.

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The bill also sows conflict, and I think we saw that in a number of the speeches in which the members of the Conservative Party talked about illegitimate refugees. What is an illegitimate refugee? A refugee is a refugee, and when refugees come to Canada's shores, we have mechanisms to determine whether they are here to exploit Canada or whether they are people fleeing for their lives. We have mechanisms for that, so to brand all of the refugees that come on a boat as illegitimate is just part of the landscape of the punitive agenda. It stokes resentment among Canadians and creates two classes of refugees, which is completely unacceptable.

The bill refuses to consider the application of the second class of refugees for permanent residence. It has greater political interference in considering the applications. In the bill men, women and children would all be sent to mandatory detention for no reason for 12 months. They would have to wait five years before even applying for permanent residency status. They are restricted from leaving Canada during that time. Worst of all, after five years they would risk being sent away because someone might assess their country as not being sufficiently dangerous.

We have seen tragic—

• (1135)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's comments. What she is not realizing is that the reason that Canadians elected a strong, stable Conservative government is because we talked about fighting organized crime and terrorism, either within or outside our own borders. This is one of the measures that we talked about, and now we are putting it into force.

Members incorrectly state that we are punishing refugees. They know that is not true, but they need to have some sort of a basis to talk about. They do not want to talk about punishing the criminals, as we are going to do.

I want the member opposite to please explain why her party and the NDP are dead set on allowing criminal organizations to abuse Canadian generosity for financial gain. Would she answer that question, please?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, before I answer that, I would like to ask the member opposite whether he has met a Tamil refugee and looked in the face of a mother with children who was part of a group being discriminated against in their own country for years, a country where 10,000 citizens of their community were murdered just before the end of the civil war and whose community may have been among those where two and a half million of their citizens were displaced during the tsunami of 2004 and forced to fend for themselves in a hostile political climate. Has the member met one of those Tamils, looked the person in the face and said that by punishing you refugees, we think we will be able to prevent smuggling?

• (1140)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member if she would elaborate on how this legislation would violate our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, just as the Conservative government has tried to propose changes to our citizenship in Canada that would create two classes of Canadian citizens, it is now proposing measures that would create two classes of permanent residents in Canada.

Some of the most vulnerable people, as I have mentioned, are incredibly strong at heart to survive reversals that we cannot even imagine, including the loss of family members, disasters and crimes against humanity, but they would be subject to being a different class of permanent resident because of the Conservative government's attempt to penalize and punish refugees as a way to pretend to make Canada's citizens safer.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we were in office at the time of the September 11 attacks, and we always tried to strike a balance between openness and vigilance. We must fulfill our responsibilities to protect citizens and fight crime, but at the same time, we do not want to build a wall around our country.

Can my colleague tell us just how dangerous it would be, under this bill, to ignore the fact that, when it comes to immigration, each refugee case is specific, and to start discriminating against certain countries, certain groups and certain people, which would put a black mark on them and prevent them from entering Canada?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

This Conservative government is seeking to politicize everything that has to do with immigration. It has given the minister decision-making power that once was in the hands of the proper authorities. It is very dangerous for Canada to have an immigration system that is so politicized that immigrants will not speak up about things they do not like for fear that the minister will punish them for decisions made by their home country and the migrants from their country.

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise in this House today to oppose this bill, which has been described as draconian by a number of experts, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. This bill is discriminatory and gives too much power to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

This bill authorizes the minister to designate as an irregular arrival the arrival in Canada of a group of persons. Those persons can thereby become designated foreign nationals. Their fate is left in the hands of the minister. In fact, if the minister deems that examinations could not be done in a timely manner, if he suspects that the persons were smuggled in exchange for money or that a criminal organization or terrorist group is involved in the smuggling, these refugees become designated claimants.

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These designated claimants are then subjected to a host of abusive and discriminatory rules. Such measures would be inconsistent with the rights granted under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and would violate section 31 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees by imposing penalties on refugees for illegal entry or presence.

Furthermore, this bill clearly violates the charter. The designated claimants—and that also includes children—must be detained upon their arrival or when they are designated. Their detention will only be reviewed after one year, or longer if the minister deems that their identity has not been established. These designated claimants may only be released when it has been established that they are refugees or when there are exceptional circumstances.

This bill obviously gives the minister too much power. This bill is arbitrary and gives the minister a great deal of discretion regarding the status of these people. These people have just arrived in Canada and are immediately treated as criminals, placed under suspicion, and, in the case of designated claimants, detained.

The Supreme Court has already abolished mandatory detention without review of security certificates. The court was clear: detention without valid reasons cannot be allowed in Canada. And yet this bill seems to ignore the Supreme Court decision.

This detention provision would allow indefinite detentions based on identity issues. There would be no possibility of release until the minister deems that the identity of the designated applicant has been fully established.

Canada has ratified many international treaties that prohibit arbitrary detention. Why does this government wish to pass a bill that would allow officers to go ahead with arbitrary detentions? Furthermore, the conditions for release are not specified. It might be a complex administrative task to establish conditions without considering individual cases.

What concerns me is that the decisions made by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism regarding applications by designated persons cannot be appealed to the refugee appeal division. This fuels my fear that this bill advances a process based on arbitrary decisions. I wonder about the recourse open to these designated applicants.

This provision could seriously contravene the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which protects refugees from such laws. My NDP colleagues also reminded the government of the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees when the government attempted to prevent refugees from certain countries from appealing decisions.

This bill unfairly attacks refugees and does not resolve the underlying problem. It is based on arbitrary decisions by the minister, decisions that cannot be appealed.

• (1145)

The bill does not stop there. It even limits claims on humanitarian grounds. Once people become designated claimants, they can not make a claim on humanitarian grounds or apply for a temporary resident permit for five years. This provision is just one more obstacle. The bill goes much too far.

Despite the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, designated claimants cannot receive a passport. Article 28 of the convention, which requires States to issue travel documents, would not apply to designated claimants.

That means that the government is suspending some of the rights of designated claimants. What is the government trying to do? Alienate all refugees? Criminalize them as soon as they arrive?

This bill not only has a significant effect on the rights of refugees, but it also applies to previous cases. Under a retroactive designation provision, the government can consider anyone who has arrived in Canada since March 2009 as a designated claimant.

We see here the scope of the power that this bill grants to the minister. He can go back to 2009, decide that a refugee is a designated claimant and impose all the provisions that accompany that status on the person in question.

This bill attacks refugees rather than the real culprits: traffickers and smugglers. There is already a serious sentence for those who are found guilty of human trafficking: life in prison. This bill unfairly punishes those who are trying to seek refuge in Canada and encourages discriminatory practices.

What worries me is the significant amount of power that would be granted to the minister if this bill were passed. The bill is based on the minister's decisions.

We must ask ourselves what the Conservatives hope to gain with such a bill. They claim that they want to fight the spread of human trafficking. Their solution is to give the minister the power to make important decisions on the status of refugees without giving them the ability to appeal that decision. The Conservatives' solution is to detain children for as long as it takes to determine their identity.

The NDP recognizes that human trafficking is a problem but it is proposing real solutions that address the real problem. The criminals—traffickers and smugglers—are the ones who must be punished.

Several months ago, the House passed a bill regarding refugees. It was strong but also balanced and fair. I believe that we should focus on improving the enforcement of that law.

• (1150)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Montcalm, for her speech.

This bill is a little odd, in light of the fact that changes were recently made to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. I would like my colleague to tell us why she thinks we have this new bill. Why has it come to this? What is the current legislation lacking for us to have a fair and equitable system?

Ms. Manon Perreault: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will use my time to mention that there is already legislation to punish traffickers. We already have a system to welcome refugees. Yes, I said "welcome". We welcome refugees, mostly people who have suffered and who are coming to Canada in search of a better life. With this bill, Canada no longer intends to welcome these people. It would instead allow immigration officers to detain children. Do we want our country known for that?

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This is a draconian bill. A number of experts have spoken out against it. It goes too far, and the best example of that is the mandatory detention of children. I am talking about children—young people who do not know what is happening to them. They have travelled very far to come to Canada. Their parents promised them a safer and better life, new friends and welcoming neighbours. I have a hard time imagining a smooth transition for these children. In fact, it is the complete opposite. Their arrival starts with mandatory detention. I cannot understand how the government can defend such a position or how it can think that it is necessary to detain children. I have a hard time understanding that someone could detain a frightened child who does not understand what is happening.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Madam Speaker, how can we attempt to work on Bill C-4 without first understanding the problem?

The bill is based on false premises. For instance, we cannot compare ourselves to countries like Italy, where the African coast is 350 kilometres from the island of Lampedusa. Some tens of thousands of refugees arrive there every year. The island has become overpopulated, with people there living practically elbow to elbow.

It is a serious problem. The European Union has worked on finding humanitarian solutions to this problem. Here, we are not at all in the same situation. We have the Arctic Ocean on one side and no one will enter the country through there. Our context is not remotely similar and we are not dealing with the arrival of a large number of boats full of refugees. Even if we were dealing with that kind of situation, we would have to respond to it in a humane way. Putting everyone in prison will not change anything. It will only require more prisons.

I would call this bill the “restricting access to refugee status act”. We cannot expect Sri Lankan refugees to arrive in business class on Japan Airlines with their lawyers. For the most part, they are farmers or small business owners who have left a war zone, who were caught in the crossfire of the conflict. They left their country with whatever means they had. They pooled their money together, bought a rusty old boat and set sail to try to seek refuge somewhere. If they were a group of Saudi millionaires, they would have bought a brand new Airbus and arrived at Pearson airport or Trudeau airport with their passports and cash.

Let us be reasonable. The worst thing about this bill is the social tension it creates; it fuels the animosity of one part of the population towards a targeted group. Then, as soon as the public begins to demand action, measures are taken. That is not a vision; it is a refusal to see the facts.

It is important to look at our history. In the past, Canada has made some unfortunate decisions. Remember what happened to Japanese Canadians during the last war; remember the Chinese head tax. We have had to apologize for those decisions. Before we make another unfortunate decision, we need to reflect and not do something that we will need to apologize for later.

We have also done good things in the past. We welcomed those fleeing the Bolshevik revolution in eastern Europe.

• (1155)

We saw how critical people were of these refugees when they arrived. Many people said that there were too many Ukrainians, Germans, and so on. But we have had Ukrainian premiers and there are people from all backgrounds who have become some of the most productive members of our society. If we had pointed fingers, lumped them together and set up barriers in their path, we would not be where we are today. And what a shame that would be.

We now have a chance to make a dignified and generous choice, and I believe we have the means to do just that. It costs less to send a young person to university than to prison. We cannot be swayed by xenophobia and poor instincts. People having a morning chat in a restaurant are allowed to make extreme comments and pass judgment without much thought, but not those of us paid \$160,000 a year to be here. We are supposed to think and act intelligently.

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently as my friend opposite made his presentation.

We have heard a lot of opposition members complain that Bill C-4 discriminates, that it puts children in detention and that it denies asylum seekers due process, but when we drill down into the bill, that is not the case at all. It currently takes 48 hours to review someone's detention, and there would be reviews in 7 days, 30 days and 30 days after that. In Bill C-4 there is an advantage for people seeking asylum. There is ongoing review. As soon as people can establish they are legitimate refugees, they are released from detention, from wherever they are held. That is an advantage in this bill.

Does the member opposite not see that as an advantage? Why does the NDP focus on the hyperbole instead of looking at the facts and advantages in this bill?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to think that everything happens in a perfect world. Bureaucracy is working well and there are regular channels that refugees can go through. However, I have before me a letter from one of my constituents who wrote to me from West Sussex, in the UK. He said he wants to sponsor his two daughters and bring them to Canada, but his efforts have been unsuccessful since 2010. He tried calling the immigration department office in Sydney, but the only response he got was on a broken answering machine and no one returned his call. He also wrote several letters, but received no response.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of comments I would like to make in response to everything I am hearing here today. First of all, I would like to pick up on my colleague's idea.

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Bill C-4 is supposed to punish traffickers with a view to discouraging them. However, this bill punishes refugees more than traffickers. It punishes victims, people in distress who simply want to escape a miserable, atrocious psychological, physical, family-related or interpersonal situation. These people are in danger and simply want to get away from all that.

What is happening, however, is that out of fear, the Conservatives are trying to create a climate of distrust. I am talking about xenophobia. Then it becomes very difficult for immigrants, and I know what I am talking about. My parents had a very hard time integrating on a cultural level, because people do not trust one another.

I would like to ask my colleague if he has thought about how we could improve this bill by targeting the traffickers instead of legitimate refugees.

• (1205)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle must have sufficient time to answer.

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, naturally, human beings do have unfortunate tendencies, such as not trusting other groups. We have even heard important people, here in Ottawa, say that there are too many French Canadians in the public service. We must be very careful because if we go down that slippery slope we are going to create mistrust. Of course, imprisoning children does not punish human traffickers. However, the idea of incarcerating our own children and sending them to adult prison is going a bit far.

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 is profoundly unfair to refugees. This bill, as presented by the government, is vague, arbitrary and discriminatory.

How can the Conservatives justify the arbitrary detention of young children? It is simply bizarre for a political party in a country like Canada to present this kind of bill in this House.

I would like to know more about the process by which these designated persons are going to be designated. I see this as a flagrant lack of transparency. What powers will the minister have in all this?

The power to designate enables the minister to discriminate between two classes of refugee protection claimants based on the method by which they arrived in Canada. That means that a person who arrives by air would not be designated or affected by this legislation, but a person who arrives by boat would be. Equality before the law is a fundamental principle in Canada, enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

How can they be proposing a bill that imposes a set of penalties on “designated” persons in direct contravention of article 31 of the refugee convention, which Canada has signed and which expressly prohibits states from imposing penalties on refugees on account of their illegal entry or presence in the territory of a state, particularly where their life, their freedom or their security is threatened.

The government is giving itself the power to arrest and detain any non-citizen, even including residents, based on a mere suspicion of criminality. We are talking about mere suspicion. How can mere suspicion justify detaining people, including children? This is

arbitrary detention, and I would remind this government that as such it is a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I do not know whether this government thinks it can place itself above the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but, as if that were not enough, the Conservatives are not limiting themselves to designated persons or refugee protection claimants. This applies to all non-citizens.

This is an unbelievable assault on the rights of newcomers. Not only will we designate refugees arbitrarily, but we will also put them in detention with no independent review for a year. In addition, these persons will be designated arbitrarily without knowing the reasons why they are to be detained for a year. I would remind this government that the highest court in Canada has clearly held that detention without review for a long period of time is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

One Commonwealth country already tried to enact a bill like the one the government wants to introduce today. Not only do the Conservatives want to put children in prison—or in detention, the word means the same thing—but their bill does not address the real issue in any event, which is to punish the traffickers, not the refugees. The title of the bill is perfectly clear, but when we read the bill, we realize that the content does not, in any way, address the objective of punishing traffickers. What is happening here is that the refugees are being punished.

On that point, the Canadian Council for Refugees points out, “Mandatory minimum sentences will not deter: under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act smuggling is already punishable by life imprisonment and mandatory minimums have been shown not to work as deterrents.” It also reminds us that Australia has tried punishing refugees in an effort to deter them, but it did not work.

I would also like to stress this fact, “The Australian public was deeply divided, with many previously unengaged citizens joining a grass-roots network to protest at their country’s inhumane treatment of refugees.” Why does this government want to push ahead when we know very well that the Canadian Council of Refugees is telling us this type of legislation is ineffective?

The Australian Human Rights Commission conducted a national inquiry into children in immigration detention and its finding, unsurprisingly, was that children had suffered numerous breaches of their human rights. We are calling for Bill C-4 to be withdrawn. The government should review the bill and tackle the real problem.

• (1210)

As my colleague, the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, said yesterday, between 2008 and 2009, the government had already spent \$45 million. I know we have to talk about economics when we talk to the Conservatives, because it seems that human rights and social justice do not mean much to them.

To detain children and detain refugees, we are going to have to build detention centres. What money is going to be used to build them? Taxpayers’ money. Is this going to help us build our economy? No, unfortunately; it is only going to make us look like a country that does not respect human rights.

Government Orders

Let us talk about children now. It is impossible to read this bill without being outraged by the provisions that affect children. Detaining and deporting children—are these things really possible in a free and democratic country like ours? Unless they are accepted as refugees or released on discretionary grounds by the minister in exceptional circumstances, children will stay in detention for at least a year. How can that be justified?

I would also like to remind the Conservatives that the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance. That is being completely disregarded by this government, which would deprive designated persons, including children, of the opportunity to make an application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds for five years, and I would repeat, with no right of appeal, which is a right instituted in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is a fundamental right.

The conventions on refugees and the rights of children lay down specific requirements to protect the children's freedom. Detaining children must be a last resort, and must be for as short a time as possible. A child may not be illegally or arbitrarily detained, and has the right to challenge the legality of such detention before a court or other independent authority.

Do the Conservatives really care about the family, the fundamental unit of our society? When I read this bill, I do not think so. Do the Conservatives recognize Canada's past commitments on the international stage, or do they intend to enact an unfair, undemocratic and discriminatory law?

Let us talk about family reunification. As I said, designated persons may not make an application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds or apply for permanent residence for five years. This means that their family members, who may be in danger in their country, will not have the opportunity to come to Canada until five years have passed. That provision is an unwarranted barrier to making an application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and is in direct contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In addition to blithely disregarding the rights of children, the bill deprives certain refugees of the security and stability they need in order to integrate into Canadian society.

I would also like to remind this government that Canada is among the countries that have signed these two conventions. Today, in the House, we see Canada completely flouting its international obligations. The United Nations General Assembly has affirmed the principle that human beings must be treated "without any discrimination" and are entitled to enjoy all of the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized.

In closing, I would like to remind this government, which makes it a point to tell us over and over how Canadians have given it a strong mandate to defend them, that only 40% of the public voted for this government, and 60% disagree with the policies it is trying to adopt today in the House.

•(1215)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the new member of the New Democratic Party for the passion in which she delivered her speech. However, I was a little discouraged in the fact that I found it short on facts and short, in some cases, on truth.

I have sat here this morning and I have listened to the New Democratic Party bring forward the misconception that bona fide refugees are being punished and that this denies international obligations. I heard the gentleman across the way, the past speaker, say that we were violating international United Nations conventions.

I would remind that party and that member that until these individuals are deemed refugees they are not refugees. They are asylum seekers until the IRB deems them to be refugees. Even if they are deemed to be refugees, they still may be inadmissible to Canada if they are found to have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity or many of those other things.

I urge the member to be cautious in her blanket statement that we are treating refugees wrong. Canada is warm and open to refugees, but many of the people who come here are deemed to be asylum seekers who do not meet the criteria for refugees. For that, I would ask her to be cautious.

Why do NDP members needlessly impugn Canada's reputation in the world when they state that we are not living up to the obligations under United Nations conventions?

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Péclet: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to remind the hon. members that the NDP does not need to impugn Canada's reputation on the world stage because this government has been doing so since 2006. The Conservatives have done a good job in that regard and continue to do so.

Second, refugees may not be allowed into Canada but that is not the issue. Does this really give the government the right to detain children illegally and arbitrarily? Does it give the government the right to treat refugees like criminals when they have committed no crime? My answer is no. It is illegal. It violates both international and Canadian law. It violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île a moment to catch her breath. I can feel her passion. She had a good vacation.

I agree with most of what she is saying but I would like to ask her a question. In a legislative process, we also have to propose amendments and give our opinions on the bill as a whole. How would she define the role of the immigration minister? Does the minister have the right to use flexible tools in some cases or must he simply be subject to a law?

Government Orders

Ms. Ève Péclet: Mr. Speaker, this bill gives the minister power without granting those affected by his decisions any right to appeal. They cannot be sure that the minister's decision will be impartial. Under this bill, the minister has all the power and is not subject to any sort of monitoring. The minister can basically do whatever he wants. That is exactly what is being given to the minister.

In a democratic society, a minister should never be given the power to make such important decisions that affect people's lives, safety and stability without the assurance that he will be monitored by someone. As it stands, the minister can do whatever he wants. We know this government's record. The Conservatives have a tendency to put the paperwork into the shredder and then there is no evidence. Right now, the minister can do whatever he wants and no one is able to monitor him.

• (1220)

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to follow my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île who gave, not only a passionate discussion of the issue, but also a very thoughtful one. I congratulate my colleague from Vancouver Quadra for her statements this morning, as well as the member for Laurentides—Labelle and the speech from the member for Scarborough—Rouge River which I had a chance to listen to yesterday.

I have also had a chance to listen to the interventions from the minister who took some exception to some of the statements made in the House and insisted that what Canada was doing was in the finest traditions of Canadian respect for the law. I want to take some time to ask how the minister can actually say that in good conscience.

He said that after the arrival of the boat from Sri Lanka, polls showed that the Canadian public wanted to refuse people all right of entry and that this measure was very modest in comparison to what the public were demanding.

I have the advantage of having been around for quite a while and I was present in the House during the debate on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I was present in the House when we voted in favour of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think I am correct in saying that I am the only member here who can point to that. That debate focused on the question of what we should do to protect minorities even when it is unpopular, because at that moment we were reflecting on our history as a country.

We were reflecting on the fact that if a poll were taken on the decision of the government of the day, which was a Liberal government, supported strongly by the official opposition, the Conservative Party at the time, to intern Japanese Canadians without trial, without right of appeal, simply on the basis of their race and on the basis of the minister having designated someone as a person of Japanese origin and who, therefore, would be incarcerated. If we had taken a poll that would have been very popular.

Is this something where we hold a finger in our mouth and hold up the finger to see which way the wind is blowing? That is not the issue here. This is an issue about the substance of Canadian law, the process that we must follow as a country in order to uphold our obligations to ourselves under the charter and our obligations to

other countries. I will go back to the basics. I will use the words of my good friend from Crowfoot, the former chair of the House foreign affairs committee, with whom I had the great pleasure of working for a period of time. He said that everybody was an asylum seeker, that they are not necessarily a refugee. That is correct.

However, this law would give the minister the power, in effect, the obligation, to designate someone in a particular category so that person would be treated differently than another asylum seeker who is also claiming refugee status. The minister uses his power to designate an individual and, as a result of that power, that person is put in detention. That separates out different kinds of refugees depending on the circumstances under which he or she comes to Canada.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Let us be clear: the popularity of the bill is not the issue here. The Conservatives are telling us that they are concerned about the economy, but that is not evident in the debate. They are addressing the issue of refugees and introducing crime bills. The Reform Party is still there; it has not disappeared. The name of the party has changed, but the Conservatives have not changed their stripes. They are not concerned about the economy. They are concerned about something else.

For us, the issue is very clear: is it legal for the government to treat people who are trying to obtain refugee status differently, based on the way in which they arrive in Canada? I do not think that that is in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter clearly states that everyone has the same rights and must be treated the same way. People cannot be treated differently based on the way in which they arrived in Canada, because this can be unfair to an individual.

[English]

Let us take our responsibility as members seriously. If the government were serious about this, it would refer the legislation to the Supreme Court of Canada. It would say that reasonable people, and that includes about every law professor and a former chair of the Immigration Appeal Board who I spoken to, have said that they do not consider this goes outside the framework of the law.

However, the government has chosen not to do that. It has not changed the legislation. It is the same bill it produced the last time the House would not have passed in its formation at that time, because the government did not have a majority. Now that it has a majority, it has said that it will go ahead and push the law forward.

For the members opposite, let me clearly make the position of the Liberal Party. We do not care whether the legislation is popular or not. The question is whether it is legal, constitutional and, therefore, the right thing to do.

Government Orders

I probably have spent as much time as anyone, with very few exceptions, particularly my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River who has lived with this issue, looking at the situation in Sri Lanka. If the government were to say that it wants to get tough on the people who are smuggling, we would say that smuggling is already illegal, that it is already against the law. It is not as if we have no legal structure in our country to deal with people trafficking in persons. It is not as if we have no laws to deal with this question. It is not as if we do not have the ability, if we can get the proof, to actually arrest people, charge people and have a trial. However, the purpose of the legislation, and the minister said it yesterday, is to ensure that people who might consider trying to come to Canada under these circumstances think long and hard before they do it.

Therefore, contrary to what the Conservative member from Musquodoboit said earlier, this is not about treating people who come by this means more fairly, which was an absurd argument, This is about actually discriminating against people who were coming in this circumstance.

The government may win all kinds of kudos from people who say that this is right on, that we should lock those people up and throw away the key. Frankly, it is important for a political party to say that this is not the issue here. The issue here is the law of Canada, which includes the charter, which is the Constitution of Canada, and that is the weakness of this bill. I can take members hammer and tongs through every piece of sentence in this law and say that, in its most simple form, it creates two classes of refugees. If people come by plane, they are one class. If they come by car, they are in another class. However, if they come in a boat, we do not want to have anything to do with them. That is wrong. Like cases, people who are applying for refugee status, should be treated fairly and squarely, according to the fundamental principles of Canadian justice.

● (1230)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two very simple questions for the member for Toronto Centre.

First, would the member not agree that by again calling for the House to refer an important matter, a matter that is of urgent importance to Canadians, to the Supreme Court rather than legislating on it here that the Liberal Party is again abdicating its responsibility to address the concerns of Canadians?

The Liberals are all assembled in the House. Are they not abdicating their responsibility as legislators to take the steps to ensure that a legal vacuum does not exist?

Second, would the member for Toronto Centre not agree that Canada has been targeted by human smuggling groups, criminal groups, organizing boatloads of human beings to come to our shores because of the negligence of the Liberal Party over the years to legislate and to ensure that the rules were followed in this area?

Would the member not agree with those two points?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I would not agree with a single sentence that the member has spoken.

I am really astounded that somebody of his experience would make that kind of a comment. It is proof that the red Tories are gone. I do not know where they once were, but they certainly are not over

on the other side anymore. He has become a Reformer, just like the others.

The member says that there is a legal vacuum. There is no legal vacuum. This is a myth which is perpetrated by the other side. There is no crisis. People are not sitting on the edge of their chairs because of this issue. It is astonishing to me. What the Conservatives are doing is trying to whip something up and are responding in that way.

No, I do not agree with his point of view that we are abdicating responsibility. We are taking our responsibilities as members, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Toronto Centre for his very thoughtful speech. I also thank him for his very touching words yesterday during the tribute to our leader, whom we miss very much.

There is one thing I find very interesting regarding the creation of classes of refugees, classes of asylum seekers, and it has to do specifically with the issue in Bill C-4, which prevents foreign nationals designated by the Minister of Immigration from appealing a decision of the Refugee Appeal Division.

Yesterday, the Minister of Immigration gave an example: Australia's supreme court invalidated the provisions that prevent these claimants from appealing.

I would like to hear what the member for Toronto Centre has to say about this and about the Supreme Court of Canada.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, the government will obviously not be referring this to the Supreme Court. And if it does not refer it, there will be years of persistent appeals.

I have no doubt that the Supreme Court would clearly state that asylum seekers must be treated fairly and that they cannot be told that they have no right to appeal. That clearly goes against every fundamental trial opportunity in our justice system.

● (1235)

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the experience of the member for Toronto Centre in Sri Lanka and his exposure to the issue, I would like to hear the member respond to the declarations by the Conservative government that this will be a deterrent, that punitive measures on refugees will be enough to keep people from fleeing for their lives and seeking asylum in other countries.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I wish we had more time to discuss that.

The question of the member for Papineau is a sign of the health of our caucus that these questions and answers are quite unrehearsed.

If we look at the pattern around the world, what creates a demand for refugee asylum are desperate circumstances in the countries in question. We can see a pattern in many parts of the world of profound hardship and deep problems, political oppression and other challenges.

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The number of people who will claim asylum and get there in the most desperate of circumstances will grow all the time. That is what makes it important for us as a country to be clear on what we are about. As a country, we are about treating people fairly. The whole refugee structure is all about that.

[Translation]

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today because Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act contains a number of elements that truly bother me.

One of those elements is the clause allowing for the detention of a permanent resident or foreign national simply on the basis of reasonable grounds to suspect—and I would like to emphasize the word “suspect”—that the person is inadmissible because of their involvement in serious or organized crime. That could lead to major problems and to various abuses of the system.

First, any refugees arriving here without having been granted status from Citizenship and Immigration Canada—and goodness knows there are plenty of delays—will mandatorily be detained when they arrive. That flies in the face of numerous international conventions signed by Canada, including the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which states the following in subsection 31(1):

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

Bill C-4 directly contravenes this article of the convention signed by Canada.

Second, these changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act will give too much discretionary power to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. These changes will allow the minister to proceed with arbitrary detentions. As I mentioned earlier, the government will be able to detain refugees on the simple pretext that they are suspected, but not accused, of criminal activities. There is an important distinction between the two. The government could detain, without valid proof, any refugee who looks suspicious to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. This could obviously lead to serious abuses.

Arbitrary detention also runs counter to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, according to the Supreme Court of Canada which struck down arbitrary mandatory detention without review of security certificates. Once again, this amendment directly contravenes many international treaties signed by Canada.

The government says that this bill will reduce human trafficking. That is a noble cause and no one opposes the principle. However, the NDP opposes Bill C-4 because these changes concentrate far too much power in the hands of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. Furthermore, the bill penalizes all refugees who arrive in Canada, but takes no action against the traffickers.

What the NDP would like to do is directly punish the criminals, the traffickers, also called human smugglers. Bill C-4, as currently worded, punishes legitimate refugees and the people who try to help

them. The process set out in this bill is vague, arbitrary and clearly discriminatory.

In closing, the current government is actively destroying Canada's fine international reputation, which includes being a country that welcomes immigrants. This must stop.

● (1240)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has talked a lot about the fact that boatloads of refugees come to Canada, and it describes this as a problem that needs to be solved right away. What the Conservative government has failed to mention, however, is that in 2010, when the boat carrying Sri Lankan refugees arrived in the port of Vancouver, the number of claimants from that boat amounted to only 2% of all asylum seekers in Canada.

Does this proportion of refugee boat people really justify a bill that strikes such a blow to refugees who are leaving their country because they are victims of persecution or human rights violations?

Mr. François Pilon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Whether it is the number of refugees or anything else, nothing justifies such a bill. All it does is punish refugees, people who are already suffering. This bill does nothing constructive. It should target the smugglers, not the refugees.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are considering a bill that amends other legislation. At this point, one of the questions we have to ask ourselves is: do we really need this new legislation, and how does it improve things as compared to the existing law? We have to start by looking at the problem from that standpoint.

If we believe the title of the bill, its purpose is to prevent human smugglers from abusing the immigration system. However, when we look at the clauses of the bill and peel back its layers, we realize that there are a lot more clauses dealing with a new designation, a new category, referred to as “designated foreign national”, which comes with conditions and penalties that may be very harsh for the people concerned, than there are clauses dealing with human smugglers. So we may wonder what the real objective of the bill is.

I wonder about something else when it comes to how the bill is presented. It gives an impression—and impressions given to the public are important—of a presumption of guilt when people arrive by boat. It is as if all these people are presumed at the outset to be guilty, or presumed to have engaged in some criminal activity or other. Honestly, I am uncomfortable with this impression of matters.

Government Orders

Something else that bothers me a bit is that the minister is given a power that might be described as arbitrary, the power to decide whether a person is a designated foreign national. On what basis will that be done? What guarantee do we have of the integrity of the process, and that it is not just a matter of whim? There does have to be something to base this kind of decision on. If we examine the consequences that flow from this designation, it is a very important decision. We have to have assurances that a minister will be relying on very reasonable grounds to be in a position to apply this. We do not see this kind of guarantee in the bill. Similarly, the minister has no accountability for his decisions. The whole purpose of this House is precisely to hold the government accountable. I see nothing in this bill where the minister can be held accountable for this kind of decision, which has major consequences for people. It is important to remember this. We are not talking about inanimate objects; we are talking about human beings.

I am also concerned about the consequences of designation. Many other people will be speaking more eloquently than I about suspended rights, potential detention, the fact that children are going to be detained in some cases, temporary exclusions and all sorts of things. What strikes me is that people are being labelled, as if they were being indelibly tattooed. For years afterwards, their lives will be affected by decisions like this. I have a problem with this. I think we already have everything we need right now to deal with these cases.

Another thing that worries me a lot is retroactive designation. I do not understand the purpose of retroactive designation. Where are we going with this? Why have retroactive designation? I have not heard anyone on the government side explain the reason for this retroactive designation. Are they simply wanting another kick at the can for a bill that failed earlier, a few years ago?

• (1245)

I hope not. That being said, that is something that has no place here.

Are all these refugees fundamentally dishonest? Think about that for a minute. Do all these people want to slip through the cracks in the system and cut to the front of the line? I am not so sure about that.

People here in Canada have a hard time keeping their own laws straight, so just imagine what people from the other side of the world know about our immigration laws. They can be taken for a ride. I agree that we have to look at trafficking and address the traffickers, but I have a hard time with the trafficking victims being attacked. It is rather ironic to see that the victims are not being protected in this bill.

When it comes to victim protection, I would like to see something in the legislation that gives the authorities—our officials, our police, the coast guard—the means to enforce the law. It seems like there are fewer and fewer means to enforce the law and more and more constraints on the authorities who have deal with a larger volume of cases.

As far as I can tell in my riding, from talking to my constituents, processing times are increasing. So if other procedures are added again and resources are not provided to process those files, all we are

going to accomplish is that more people will stay in detention, not necessarily because they deserve it, but because we do not have the means to process the files. But the government is not tackling that issue.

I have talked about a lot of things so far, but not much about smugglers. Why? Well, there is little about them in the bill. Basically, there are only two things: the scope of the definition of a smuggler is slightly broader so as to include those who incite people to use smugglers or traffickers; and there are additional penalties for aggravating circumstances. How many smugglers are going to be intercepted with this bill? How many traffickers are going to be stopped under this bill? I have a feeling that the number is close to zero because the real problem is not being addressed.

I feel that the issue has been blown out of proportion; an immigration issue that has to do with lack of resources when people arrive in large numbers has become a public safety issue, although it is not one at all. We must avoid anything arbitrary or decisions that appear arbitrary. It is important for the reputation of our country that our minister does not give the impression of making arbitrary decisions. It is important for our parliamentary system.

We have an immigration act. Why not give the department the means to enforce it properly, even when there are extra costs on occasion?

To conclude, the bill should definitely be split in order to tackle the issue of smugglers on its own. I believe that the government would then have the support of this side of the House.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite carefully to what the member was saying and I am concerned. It seems to me the member is advocating that people who claim refugee status in this country should not need to have proper documentation so that we can verify who they are, where they are from, and that they are bona fide refugees. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act requires that an applicant establish his or her identity and the Canadian courts have upheld this.

Is the member really saying that anyone who arrives in Canada should simply be released to walk around freely when we do not know who the person is or what the person has done in his or her country of origin, or whether the person has committed crimes in other lands? How would this ensure the safety and security of Canadian families?

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, what I said during my speech is very simple. I said that we currently have an Immigration Act that I believe does the job and does not require amendments, such as the ones proposed in this bill. Simply put, we should enforce the existing legislation and give departmental officials the means and the resources to do so. We do not need to go further than that.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Louis-Hébert and officially congratulate him on his election.

Government Orders

This morning, the member for Laurentides—Labelle raised a point that was also touched upon by the member for Toronto Centre. They made it clear that an immigrant is an immigrant, that there are a number of ways to immigrate, whether it is by sea, air or land, and that a smuggler is a smuggler. We have legislation in Canada to imprison these smugglers for life. There is no punishment greater than that, other than death. A refugee is a refugee. When we talk about refugees who arrive by boat, as has happened in the past, they do not arrive with their papers and their passports. We have to understand that they are refugees. So perhaps people should look at the definition of the word “refugee,” because a refugee is a refugee.

I have a question for my colleague. Does he not get the impression that the current government is not in a position to enforce the laws that it has proposed itself?

• (1255)

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question, as it gets to the very heart of my speech—the resources given to the public administration to enforce the law. There is a supposed problem and instead of allocating resources to fix it, they are creating a new law. Why? Maybe because it makes for a good press conference or photo shoot. It is not as sexy to provide departments with the resources needed to implement measures. At this point in time, I think we need to start by providing the means to enforce existing laws.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism introduced and spoke to the bill, he made reference to the primary purpose of the bill being to get at the profiteers or smugglers.

We have argued that the bill will not have any impact on that. In the hon. member's comments, he made reference to the number of smugglers this particular bill will actually catch. I believe he said it would catch zero.

I wonder if he would just expand on that particular point. We believe it will have minimal, if any, impact whatsoever. Would the member add a comment on that?

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I do not believe that the legislation we have before us will allow us to take action against traffickers. All that is happening, and we have heard it from the other side of the House, is that we are moving the problem to another country. I think that we should be using international agreements to resolve this type of issue, but that is not what the government is currently doing.

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-4, following many of my colleagues from the NDP who have pointed out the serious flaws and problems with the bill. Of course, we all remember the bill that was presented in the previous Parliament, Bill C-49.

I want to begin my remarks today by registering my concern about what I have seen over the years from the government. It seems to me that refugees have become scapegoats; they have become political

footballs to target and, in many ways, to tarnish. The bill before us today, a continuation of Bill C-49, seeks to do that.

I have been listening to the debate today in the House and have heard Conservative members say that smugglers should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and that this bill is about going after smugglers. However, as my colleagues have pointed out, in actual fact the bill really does not speak to that issue.

In reality, Parliament did pass a bill a few months ago dealing with refugees. The laws that we already have in place contain provisions ensuring a life sentence for human smuggling. This raises the serious question of why this legislation is coming forward and what its purpose is.

When the bill was originally introduced in the previous Parliament, many organizations, such as the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International Canada, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Centre for Refugee Studies, examined the bill and in a thoughtful way pointed out its serious problems.

These organizations studied the issue, not from a partisan point of view but a neutral point of view, as to whether or not the proposed legislation would be harmful to our refugee process or would assist that process. All members of the House, and certainly the government, should be aware that the response to the bill was resoundingly negative by the organizations that work closely on the issue.

We in the NDP have significant concerns. We are concerned that the bill would basically allow two classes of refugee claimants. It would allow designated claimants to be detained mandatorily, including their children. I think it is very powerful that many members today have spoken of their feelings about this aspect alone. What would it mean to incarcerate and detain children or not allow family reunification? This is a serious problem with the bill.

I remember a few years ago, when another boat arrived off the coast of B.C. from Fujian province in China, dozens of claimants were detained. I remember visiting them in jail in Burnaby, British Columbia. I remember the incredible issues and concerns they had in terms of not having access to lawyers, not being able to make proper phone calls, not having culturally sensitive provisions and food, and being separated from their families. That was a few years ago, and this bill was not even in effect at that time. I remember delivering a series of letters by the detained women from Fujian province to the minister, imploring the minister to address their grievances and the situation they were facing in staying in jail for many months.

Government Orders

If the bill goes through, we will see a system set in place that would give enormous power to the minister. Notwithstanding any other provisions in the bill, this is something that we should be very worried about. We have seen so much legislation from the government that centralizes authority and power and decision-making and discretion with the minister. Why on earth would we undermine our system overall and confer such extraordinary powers on the minister to designate claimants and then, as a result, place them in detention? That alone is a serious problem with the bill.

● (1300)

Canada has had a reputation of being a fair and reasonable country in protecting refugees and their rights, providing settlement in this country and upholding international law. Yet many of us today, in expressing our thoughts and concerns about this bill, point to the fact that this bill itself may end up facing a charter challenge and that it may be in contravention of international treaties. This leads me to wonder why this bill has come forward.

Why are we targeting human smuggling in this fashion when we already have provisions in the law that deal with such smuggling? We already have provisions in a new refugee bill that produced a more balanced result. Why is this particular bill coming forward?

I have come to the conclusion, as I think have many others, that it is more about a political line or optic that the Conservative government wants to lay down. It is like their get tough on crime approach. It has nothing to do with dealing with real issues and complex situations; it has everything to do with laying down a very simplistic approach that gives more power to the minister and actually strips away the rights we have had for refugees in this country.

Another very problematic provision in the bill is the fact that designated claimants would be denied access to appeal. They could not make an application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. These are all hallmarks of the system we have in place. They are actually provisions that we members of Parliament use. We hear from constituents who are often in very difficult situations, who have come from another country and are going through the process and who may end up making an application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds to the minister. Yet here we have this bill that, all of a sudden, would not allow that to happen.

So it seems to me that this is a very serious step being taken. Here I would note that in the previous Parliament, the three opposition parties adamantly opposed the bill, and in fact the government did not bring it forward because it knew that the bill would likely be defeated by a majority in Parliament. Now we have a majority Conservative government, but that does not deter us from raising these significant points and alerting the public that, while the government might be fear-mongering and putting a political spin on this, the reality is that this is very bad legislation.

I want to thank the organizations that have taken the time to examine the bill thoroughly to give us their analysis to help us see the reality that this bill is very bad.

In today's global world, it seems very ironic to me that we have a government hell-bent on allowing capital to move wherever it wants with no restraints. We have a government that has, at the top of its

agenda, trade agreements that have virtually no restraints. So there is this idea of freedom of movement in the globalized world. Yet when it comes to people, the real resource in our world, humans and their capacity to produce and to live productive lives, we see this draconian legislation aimed at slamming people who may make very legitimate refugee claims in this country, who may be fleeing persecution and may have been taken advantage of and exploited.

There is no question that we need to focus on the problems that exist with human smuggling, but as I have pointed out, there are already very stiff provisions dealing with that aspect. This bill does not speak to that; this bill is targeted at the refugee claimants themselves. It is targeted at the people who are in that situation, if they arrive by boat. So this is bad legislation.

I am very proud that New Democrats are standing up against this legislation and pointing out the problems with it. I hope that if it does go to committee, we will have an opportunity to go through this bill in great detail, to make substantive changes and come to some recognition that the bill as is cannot go forward.

● (1305)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been a very enlightening debate. One of the references I have heard during the course of this debate was the misnomer in the title of this particular bill. This bill has been referred to by one of my colleagues as a refugee punishment pact, as opposed to the title the government has for it.

My friend from Vancouver East comes from an area of this country that has been very welcoming to new Canadians over the years and, certainly, the broader community around them.

The picture the government is trying to paint to justify the changes in this legislation is that of an outright rash of illegal refugees coming to the borders, and certainly through B.C.

Is that the member's experience? Is that what she knows to be true in this particular issue?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the member for Cape Breton—Canso is entirely correct. We have had isolated cases where people have arrived by boat and the government has really stoked fear in people. I can remember some situations where that has occurred. However, there are probably more people who arrive by plane, for example, or over the border. Very little attention is paid to that in terms of specific legislation.

It really demonstrates for us that this legislation has been targeted to a very specific group that is way beyond what is actually taking place. We already have stiff provisions around human smuggling. We already have other laws that deal with our refugee system. This legislation is way over the top, it is bad legislation and it is clear that we need to change it.

● (1310)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her eloquent words, as well as for her help in the past during my wife's immigration process to this country.

Government Orders

Does my colleague agree that the government is dangerously trying to sow cultural intolerance and division among Canadians and could she elaborate on the effect this fearmongering and targeting of refugees and immigrants will have on the very fabric of Canadian society?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, that is a very thoughtful question and one that the government does not want to answer. It wants to run for cover.

The fact is that when we look at this legislation and the agenda as a whole, it is about division, scapegoating and targeting people. It is about using optics in the media and playing on people's fears. I cannot think of a worse kind of public policy agenda. I think most Canadians would be abhorrent to that kind of agenda and yet this legislation is clearly targeted to meet a political end for the government. That is something we cannot tolerate.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to participate in this extremely important debate. For all of us who have spent some time in the House, issues of refugees and immigration continue to be an important part of the work we do here in Parliament.

For those who are watching, here is a bit of history.

On June 16, 2011, the Minister of Public Safety introduced Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act. The short title, if we can call it that, is, "Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act", which is quite a ridiculous title actually.

As a former minister of citizenship and immigration, I understand the difficult legal and political pressures that are faced by any minister of citizenship and immigration. I also know how hard it is to establish the balancing act between the rights of individuals and their need for a safe, secure and legal immigration system. However, as someone who represents one of the most culturally diverse areas in Canada, I am concerned that Bill C-4 casts too wide a net. This new net would catch some of those who hope to abuse our system but, at the same time, it would make many honest and decent people legitimately seeking a new life pay a hefty price.

I want to be clear as I go forward. I am now and have always been a strong supporter of measures that will help make Canada and Canadians safer. However, I am not prepared to support measures that will make Canadians feel safe while offering no actual safety enhancements. It is very similar to the crime bill and all the other things that make people feel better but, in reality, are very ineffective and simply cost a lot more money. Many of the provisions in Bill C-4 are exactly that. They are knee-jerk and miss the mark when it comes to real safety for all of the people who are trying to get to our shores.

Bill C-4 would allow the minister, or an officer, which is an important point, to refuse to consider an application for permanent residence. It would change the legal definition of a criminal organization. It would provide that the immigration division must impose conditions on the release of certain designated foreign groups. Clearly, that is another form of discrimination. It also would extend the time for instituting summary conviction proceedings from six months to a draconian five years.

For example, Bill C-4 would allow the government to arbitrarily label groups of people arriving on our shores with a specific designation. This may sound simple to some of those watching who may not understand how complex our immigration laws are. Let us take a closer and more practical look at what this might mean if it were applied to a real situation.

In 2010, the ship *Sun Sea* approached our west coast with some 500 men, women and children aboard. It had been determined that the affair involved criminal human smuggling and even terrorist implications. Those who were involved in any of that should be severely punished. However, it was also determined that several of the passengers were innocent victims of circumstance, particularly the children.

One could imagine if the government were to designate the entire passenger list as criminal or terrorist. I think Canadians and all of us in the House would be shocked if we started throwing innocent men, women and children in jail simply because of the manner in which they arrived. Had they arrived by plane or car it would not be an issue, but because they were arriving by boat it was an issue. Most of these people did nothing wrong and a hard-line one-size-fits-all approach is not prudent nor is it appropriate.

Another example of Bill C-4 is that it would provide for a minimum punishment for the offence of human smuggling. Most Canadians, myself included, want human smugglers to be punished severely. However, there is legislation on the books and if that part needs to be reinforced, then that should be reinforced, but we do not punish the innocent people who were struggling to escape from abuse, the severity of which many of us have no idea.

● (1315)

Bill C-4 has been designed to promote a feeling of safety rather than overhauling the system in a way that would create and shape an effective system that offers actual safety to Canadians and fairness to those who are trying to come to Canada for the right reasons.

We can do better than what is offered in Bill C-4. I hope all parliamentarians have a true opportunity to work on this legislation to ensure it accomplishes what it is meant to accomplish, which is to ensure that our country is protected from terrorists and does not become an open door policy for people who try to get here to abuse our system, but that it also ensures that we are punishing those who need to be punished and not punishing innocent people who are trying to come to our country.

Most of us understand that our world from the perspective of terrorism, security and the related legal frameworks changed dramatically forever on September 11, 2001. Bill C-4 responds to the politics of September 11, but it fails to truthfully and adequately address the realities also associated with 9/11.

Bill C-4 is setting the tone for a relationship between the government and all new Canadians. The government has made a great deal out of its emerging relationships with Canada's minority communities but these actions speak much louder than the words. Politics of division should not be shaping changes to Canada's immigration and refugee systems. I believe that is not the intent but clearly that is how it appears to everyone. Unorthodox does not mean equal bad. Just because people arrive in an unusual manner does not mean they have nothing to offer to Canada, nor does it mean that they are a threat.

Canada's former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson was a refugee claimant to Canada, as are many other people in this country. She and her family fled to Canada from Hong Kong using, again, less than conventional means. It might not have been a boat but it was unconventional. Ms. Clarkson's family fled to Canada in the wake of war in the Pacific in 1942. It is only through her father's government connections that the Poy family gained the opportunity to flee to Canada as part of the repatriating of Canadian government staff. She had that opportunity. Not everyone is quite as lucky.

The Chinese Immigration Act 1923 prevented the Clarkson family, the Poy, as they were known then, immediate entry into the country until the Department of External Affairs intervened and smoothed away the barriers that were preventing her from coming here. It would seem that Adrienne Clarkson, a refugee who came to Canada through all the wrong channels and then worked hard to raise her family and to contribute to our society, eventually becoming the Queen's representative, was worth the benefit of the doubt.

We can just imagine what would have been lost if Adrienne Clarkson had been turned away because she had failed to apply correctly. She was desperate to get out of the country.

We can do better than the version of Bill C-4 that is on the table today. As I indicated earlier, I hope all parliamentarians will have an honest opportunity to work together on this issue. It is such an important one because it tells the world what Canada is all about. Canada is not about taking boatloads of people, putting them all in jail and treating them all as if they were terrorists, when we clearly know that is not the case.

• (1320)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for York West and I have known each other for many years. I know she was a former minister of citizenship and immigration and she will appreciate how from time to time there are very difficult situations the governments of the day and the minister of the day must deal with when situations present themselves.

Canada certainly is not encouraging boatloads of refugees through smugglers to come to Canada, but it does happen from time to time. I am surprised to hear the member speak against the bill recognizing the fact that she was in the minister's shoes at one point in time and perhaps may have wanted to exercise some of the powers under the bill.

Could she explain why things are different today than when she was the minister previously?

Government Orders

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, clearly we were a government that did not react on a knee-jerk basis every time by announcing we would put people who did this or that in jail. We were much more compassionate. I do understand very well, as do several of my colleagues on this side of the House who have been ministers.

It is a balancing act between doing what is constitutionally right and what is legally right by respecting the rights of people who are being terrorized and endure tremendous hardships when they are fleeing from their countries.

We are lucky in this country because we have a roof over our head and food on the table. We have no idea how tough or difficult life is for the many people who are desperate to escape from war-ravaged countries. Until we attempt to walk in their shoes, we have no understanding of how terror and starvation can lead them to pursue such desperate and illegal measures as paying \$50,000 to get on a boat to come here. They are desperate and it is that desperation that ministers need to take into consideration in the balancing act of the choices they must make.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for York West.

Is that not the crux of the issue? We are talking about immigration, which is a topic she is familiar with as she was the minister. This morning the member for Burlington spoke about security. Is the crux of the issue not that the current government is mixing up security and immigration? Refugees are not necessarily people we worry are going to jeopardize Canada's security. The majority of them are not dangerous; they are simply poor and need asylum.

Another department deals with security.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the reality is there are thousands of people abroad who are desperate to escape their war-ravaged countries to come to Canada. More money needs to be put into a process that would deal with the backlog of applications that every country has. Last I heard, Canada was obligated to take in 20,000 refugees. We took in 14,000. More money is required for a system to process legitimate refugees from refugee camps so that they can come to Canada.

People are frustrated with the system and how long it takes. They are desperate people. If they had any other choice, they would not pay all of that money to get on one of those boats and be subjected to the conditions we have seen.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has brought to our attention the method used by the current government when dealing with issues, whether they be justice, immigration or whatever issues they might be, which is to scare the heck out of the Canadian public first.

My hon. colleague was the minister of citizenship and immigration and brought forward some very relative changes in that department while there. Could she list the names of all boats that brought in illegal refugees during her term? Were there any at all during her term as minister?

Government Orders

● (1325)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, there were none at that time. That is not something that is encouraged in this country and people know that abroad. That is the result of people trying to steal money from those who are desperate and provide them that opportunity.

As a government and a country, the message we need to send is that is not an acceptable way to come here. What I would hope to hear from the government is that it will commit to more resources.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 concerns me in a very particular way and I think it should be rejected for many reasons, but mainly for humanitarian and social justice reasons.

I am able to stand before you here today in part because my parents were granted refugee status in 1980, thanks to the Canadian government's openness and its profound understanding of the precarious situation they found themselves in at the time. That extremely positive move allowed thousands of Vietnamese people to escape the miserable conditions in which they lived and to regain their dignity in Canada.

I do not dare even think about the additional consequences my parents would have suffered if Bill C-4 had been in force when they arrived in this country. Through their story, I will explain my position and demonstrate why I think this bill is clearly unfair and, more importantly, misses the target.

In 1979, after the Vietnam war, my parents decided to flee their country because of the horrible living conditions imposed by the new political regime and in the hopes of finding a better quality of life elsewhere. They could no longer endure the restrictions, the violence and the injustices that happened after the war. They jumped at the first opportunity to flee in the middle of the night, in secret, with my two brothers, who were one and three at the time. They made their way to a port and paid the smugglers with the last of their belongings, that is, whatever they could carry, such as clothing and jewellery. They got on a boat, with the direction indicated by a compass, in other words, anywhere, without knowing if the smugglers would take them to a safe harbour, take them somewhere dangerous or simply abandon them along the way. They risked their entire lives and those of their children.

Why did they decide to come by boat? The answer is simple: they had no other choice. Some 400 other people were also on the boat with them.

This bill creates two categories of refugees, including those who are designated because of their method of arrival, namely, by boat. These refugees are at a higher risk of detention than those who arrive by plane. This provision violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees equality before the law, as well as the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which prohibits States from imposing sanctions on refugees because of their illegal entry. What is meant by illegal entry? This term has not been defined and remains unclear.

In addition, few refugees think to bring proof of identity. Their only concern is to save themselves, to disappear as quickly and quietly as possible. These people who do not have any identification

are automatically suspected of not being real refugees. As a result, the minister could deem them to be "designated foreign nationals" and they could be detained. The burden of proof is being reversed here. Refugee claimants arriving in Canada are no longer free while they wait for their claims to be processed. They are detained and considered "designated foreign nationals" until proven otherwise. This arbitrary detention is contrary to the charter and international law.

As my parents can attest, the journey made by refugees is long and difficult. Their ultimate goal is to survive the many dangers and threats they face: a lack of hygiene, food and water, as well as the many attacks by pirates who may rape the women, steal the refugees' belongings or commit gratuitous acts of violence against them just to scare them. That is exactly why most countries in the world, including Canada, signed the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951.

The convention's preamble states that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination. It seems that the members of the Conservative government forgot this principle when they drafted this odious bill.

At the time, my parents were able to choose a host country since they were recognized as refugees on humanitarian grounds. Clearly, they were questioned, photographed and made to take an oath. Canada provided them with identification documents since they did not have any.

Under Bill C-4, my parents and my brothers likely would have been deemed "designated claimants" and would have all been mandatorily detained upon their arrival for a period of one year or possibly more. Since my parents did not have any documents, it was very difficult to establish their identity. Such imprisonment is completely arbitrary and discriminatory, is it not?

Before arriving in Canada, they were already scarred from their painful escape: recurring nightmares, irrational fear of thieves, no trust or great difficulty developing trust in people, and constant suspicion of everyone.

● (1330)

They saw danger everywhere at all times. They have also suffered greatly from being uprooted from their country and their family. They never talk about that experience because it was too atrocious, too harsh and the memories are unbearable. Nonetheless, in order to help put things into context, yesterday my parents agreed to retell their story to me.

It is hard to live in a refugee camp and go through the trials of being on the boat; it is also hard to adapt to the way of life in the new country, to culture shock, to social integration, to the temperature, to social isolation caused mostly by the language barrier and because they were potentially dangerous foreigners. At the time, my parents spoke rudimentary French.

Sending them to prison to boot under the pretext that they represented a potential threat would have been completely ludicrous in their case and in the case of thousands of other Vietnamese refugees.

Government Orders

Why not attack the traffickers more effectively in this case and dig deeper into what they are doing here and abroad instead of attacking the refugees?

Fortunately at the time, Canada opened the door to my parents and all those people in distress who were fleeing their country. My parents were gradually able to integrate into Canadian society. They learned French and worked very hard. When they arrived, they had to cope with underpaid exhausting work, frustration and discrimination. However, they managed to integrate. They went to school, they took care of us and they both became nurses. Today my parents take care of sick people and they do so with the same compassion they were shown by Canadians when they first arrived here in need of refuge.

My parents would have had an entirely different experience if the bill the Conservatives are proposing today had been in effect. They might have been detained with their two young children for a year or more. They would have been denied the right to social integration and dignity. Canadian society as a whole would miss out, because to send refugee claimants to prison is to deny Canada many courageous and intelligent people who want to contribute to the country's growth.

If Canadian authorities had made a mistake and had denied my parents refugee status, they would have been able to appeal. But this bill takes that right away from refugees because rulings on claims by designated persons cannot be appealed to the Refugee Appeal Division. This violates the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

The Conservatives are saying that this bill will reduce the amount of human trafficking. But in reality, the bill, in its current form, puts too much power in the hands of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and unjustly penalizes refugees.

I agree that we should punish criminals, traffickers and smugglers directly. However, the bill, as it stands, punishes legitimate refugees and the people trying to help them.

If Canada had not accepted my parents, we would not be who we are today. My brothers, sisters and I inherited this desire to serve our country from our parents and the Canadians who welcomed them. For other stories like this to have a happy ending, we need to recognize the rights of those coming after us.

I am asking the members here to put themselves in the shoes of a refugee. Imagine the desperate conditions these people endure in war-torn countries: fear, hunger, suffering and torture. Would they not try to flee, risking their lives and carrying only the bare essentials? After fleeing the violence and persecution, they would be imprisoned upon their arrival in Canada. Does that make any sense? Detaining a person who is claiming refugee status without providing an independent review is both discriminatory and shocking.

This bill also strips certain refugees of the opportunity to apply for permanent residence. Refugee claimants are not allowed to sponsor their wife or children for five years. That is another clear violation of family rights.

As well, as we said earlier, children are imprisoned, with all of the negative consequences that can have on a child's development.

I would like to conclude by asking the government and this House that this bill be withdrawn and reworked so that it actually tackles the issue of traffickers and smugglers, not the rights and freedoms of refugees.

• (1335)

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing this story with us. I would like her to comment on the economic impact of the bill. As I mentioned previously, this bill will lead to the construction of prisons and detention centres. And, as my hon. colleague explained, people will have psychological problems and, if they are accepted as refugees or permanent residents, they will probably have to go to the hospital, which will cost taxpayers even more money. Above all, an individual may not seek permanent residence, work or attend school for five years.

For the benefit of the government, I would like her to speak about the economic impact of this bill.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for raising this very relevant aspect of the bill. Economically, there are a lot of negative consequences. This bill is also very repressive with regard to the treatment of human beings. As my colleague said, it would result in a lot of detentions and would be very costly. The individuals detained would suffer considerable harm—especially the children—and they would not even have the means to cover the cost of a psychologist or mental health professional to help them.

As for the children who would be detained, according to a number of studies, their detention is more detrimental before age 5 or 6 and is the most detrimental before age 3 because it is during the first three years of life that children develop their physical, mental and social capabilities.

These children would be detained for close to a year. Other studies show that being removed from the school environment causes setbacks, which leads to a phenomenon of regression in children.

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International Canada, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association and the Centre for Refugee Studies are all opposed to this bill. I would like to ask the hon. member if she thinks that the Conservative government is stubbornly committed to passing this bill for ideological reasons.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member. I really think that, with this bill, the government wants to show that it is fighting terrorism and crime. This is totally the wrong approach to the matter, because its way of showing people that it is attacking terrorism and crime is really inappropriate. Instead, it is attacking refugees, people who need help, people who urgently need support in order to get back to a normal, healthy life.

Government Orders

I can go on: many decisions are completely vague and arbitrary, contravening a number of charters and conventions. It is totally unjustified; bill C-4 absolutely must be withdrawn so that it can be revised and reworked.

• (1340)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. member for her touching, first-hand account of how some refugees who come here by boat can make very positive contributions to this country.

I would like to ask the hon. member the following question. In her speech, she made a distinction between traffickers, smugglers and those who help refugees. Perhaps she could tell us more about this distinction so that we can fully grasp what happens to those people.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member.

Traffickers are those who bring migrants, refugees and so on to the country in order to make a profit. Smugglers are just those who do so without necessarily profiting from it. There are also those who welcome people once they are here. For example, the Red Cross provided my parents with very specific help when they fled from their country.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, it seems like the Conservative members are extremely confused about the difference between immigrants and refugees. This morning, we heard the hon. member for Burlington refer to his Italian in-laws. By no means do I wish to say anything negative about in-laws—I have wonderful in-laws, one of whom is from the Philippines and also immigrated here—but I am convinced that, in their home country, the member for Burlington's in-laws were not subject to persecution, violation of their human rights, danger of torture or risk to their lives. There is a big difference.

We are talking here about refugees who face grave danger and flee their country to escape these threats to their safety and their integrity. I also heard the government side say that we are facing an invasion of refugees and that we must put a stop to it immediately. The Conservatives are referring to a particular case that occurred in 2010, where Sri Lankan refugees, who had indeed done business with traffickers and smugglers, were arriving by boat and requesting asylum. However, it is important to realize that there were approximately 500 people on that boat requesting asylum. Were these requests to be processed, they would represent 2% of all cases processed by the Immigration and Refugee Board.

In response to another Conservative member who stated that we do not want them to conduct any investigations at all, I would like to say that we simply want all refugee claimants, whoever they may be, to have access to the same system, which would not be the case if Bill C-10 were to be passed.

Bill C-10 also shows the government's contempt for the international conventions and treaties that Canada has signed, for example, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1989 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, not to mention the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which I will come back to later.

Bill C-4 has four problems and should therefore be defeated or at least heavily revised. The first problem has been mentioned several times. The bill separates refugees into two separate categories: refugees whose claims are processed in the regular manner and refugee claimants who could be deemed to be designated foreign nationals. If one person arrives by plane or by boat, he or she is considered a refugee claimant who can request the regular process. If a group of people arrives by boat, under the bill, they must be deemed to be designated foreign nationals.

There are two separate processes for two separate classes, which was a completely arbitrary decision on the immigration minister's part. This particular provision contravenes article 31 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which specifically says that the Contracting States shall not impose penalties on account of their illegal entry or presence in Canada. But that is exactly what the government wants to do. It wants to be able to detain them for a year. That is a violation of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. And it is definitely a violation of section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which deals with the rights of every individual, whether Canadian or a refugee, to equality before and under the law. But we are going to have two separate classes that will be subject to two separate processes.

The second problem is the mandatory detention of designated foreign nationals for 12 months. For one thing, that is a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, under which every individual has a right to legal counsel and the guarantee of habeas corpus. So it is also a violation of article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which requires the same thing.

The third problem is that refugee claimants cannot apply for permanent residence for at least five years. That is specifically a violation of article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child because the best interests of the child are not looked after in that decision. It seems the government is looking more after the best interests, the political ones in particular, of the Minister of Immigration. This also poses a problem when it comes to a very current issue, family reunification. After all the nice things the Conservatives had to say about it, now that the time has come to put something on paper to make the reunification process easier, they are putting up barriers blocking it.

• (1345)

That is the case with Bill C-4.

The fourth problem, and I mentioned it a number of times this morning, is the fact that the government is preventing refugees from appealing to the Refugee Appeal Division. For refugees who arrive via airplane, their case will be examined by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. These people have the right to appeal a decision that they deem to be unfair. For refugees who arrive via boat and who are declared “designated foreign nationals,” they do not have that opportunity. That clearly violates article 16 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Article 16 specifically states that a refugee shall have free access to the courts of law on the territory of all contracting states. In addition, it states that a refugee shall enjoy in the contracting state in which he has his habitual residence the same treatment as a national in matters pertaining to access to the courts, including legal assistance and exemption from *cautio judicatum solvi*.

It is clear that this bill creates two classes of asylum seekers, which completely goes against the principle of equality that should guide the legislators in this House.

I would like to raise one last point regarding the issue of appeals. Yesterday, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism held Australia as an example to follow.

The immigration minister failed to mention that in November 2010, the Australian supreme court issued a ruling in the case of a Sri Lankan refugee, in which it was deemed unconstitutional, under the Australian Constitution, that he did not have access to the appeal courts. Thus, the Australian supreme court invalidated these provisions. The same thing will happen in Canada, for the same reasons.

I think it is clear that the government has no respect for its international obligations—obligations that Canada agreed to and signed off on. It is clear that the government is trying to politicize the issue of refugees for its own purposes by using sheer populism to attack victims of persecution who are trying to seek asylum in Canada. By refusing equal treatment to all asylum seekers, it is clear that the government has no respect for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

For all of these reasons, I am unable to support Bill C-4, a bill that I believe is unfair, that punishes people who are already victims and that will certainly have very few consequences for human traffickers.

I would remind the House that under current Canadian legislation, human traffickers, or smugglers, already face the maximum sentence they can be subjected to, that is, life imprisonment. This bill includes a few additional factors that would have absolutely no deterrent effect.

This bill's intention is clear. Taking a closer look, we can see that nearly half of the bill simply discriminates more and creates different classes of asylum seekers. Thus, the bill is misnamed. This bill does not address human trafficking. This bill does not tackle the main problem, that is, smugglers who abuse the situation and take advantage of the desperation of people facing persecution, human rights violations, or even torture or death. The bill simply aims to discriminate against various groups of asylum seekers and allow the Canadian government to treat people differently in a very serious situation. This will reflect poorly on us internationally.

● (1350)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the minister introduced Bill C-4, he said the primary purpose of it was to target the profiteers and to go after the smugglers. It is interesting that the member talked about punishing the victims. That is a point we really need to pick up on.

In the bill the government is zeroing in on the profiteers, and the number of profiteers who are going to be penalized by this bill is zero. On the other hand, I want to pick up on the point of who is actually being punished. Individuals are landing on our shores, whether by plane or boat, and for the most part are seeking asylum because if they stay in the countries they originate from, their lives could be shortened. There are threats of torture and all sorts of other horrendous acts.

Would he not concur with me that they are already victims, and now they will be victims a second time because of the government's action? Would he concur with that?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for his very pertinent question.

Indeed, that would be the case. Clearly, this bill does nothing more to address the issue of smugglers. The current Criminal Code already sets out a maximum sentence. As for the other aspect of the bill, concerning asylum seekers, they are persecuted and the victims of human rights violations. They often have to risk their lives and flee their country in order to ask for protection. This bill would have them treated like second-class asylum seekers, compared to today's asylum seekers. This bill completely flies in the face of the Canadian spirit that led to the signing of international conventions to protect the rights of refugees. With this bill, the Conservative government seems to be making a mockery of those rights.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He made several references to our international obligations with respect to this problem. I would like my colleague to speak more about the measures that the House could adopt to deal with the problem of trafficking while meeting our international commitments.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is very pertinent, and the answer quite simple. We must provide the people responsible for law enforcement—the coast guard, the police, the courts—with the means to do their job, together with our international partners, in order to get rid of smugglers, the vultures who take advantage of people's despair to turn a profit.

A bill such as this one will not solve the problem. With regard to the other part of the bill, which deals with handling asylum seekers, the solution is simple. The necessary resources must be allocated to the existing body, the Immigration and Refugee Board. This body takes into account many elements when deciding whether or not to grant refugee status, and the process should be available to all asylum seekers, whether they arrive by boat or other means.

Statements by Members

● (1355)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again today we have misinformation being given by both parties on the other side. Yesterday, one of the members indicated that 99% of the refugee claimants, asylum seekers from the *Ocean Lady* and the *Sun Sea*, had been processed. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Again today members opposite are implying that on this side of the House there is a lack of compassion. We have increased the number of refugees who can access Canada by 2,500 a year.

Is it not reasonable that our border and security officials have access to know whom they are dealing with and to determine whether these people are simply fleeing persecution or could, in some cases, be fleeing prosecution?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative member does not seem to have heard my presentation. The Immigration and Refugee Board already has a process for investigating smugglers and examining claims for asylum. We are asking that all refugees, no matter how they arrive here, have access to the same process, not that the government create two separate processes because that is how it has decided to score political points.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I must tell the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso that I will have to interrupt his speech at 2 o'clock for the usual statements by members.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that overwhelming sound of indifference from my colleagues when they heard that my speech would be cut short.

This has been a very enlightening debate. Many of the speakers have brought very important points forward today throughout the course of the debate, certainly in the presentation that was presented by our leader, the member for Toronto Centre. In light of his vast experience on this topic and what he has done and seen over the course of his career, he sees a government that has certainly missed the mark in bringing forward this legislation.

We have seen it time and again, regardless of the issue such as the omnibus justice bill presented today. With regard to legislation on immigration before us now, the government has taken the approach that it first wants to soften the ground. It wants to scare the Canadian public into thinking that there is some type of crisis in our midst, that there is this onslaught of illegal refugees who are towering on our shores.

In the debate earlier today we heard from the member for York West, a former minister of citizenship and immigration. She had never dealt with a case like this during her tenure. Several of those involved in the debate today spoke with reference to the fact that there had been no significant increase, yet it has been put before the Canadian people that there is a degree of urgency because of an onslaught of refugees.

We see the same thing with the omnibus justice bill, which was presented and will be debated later in the House, that there is a crime

wave sweeping across the country. When that fear is created, the government then is in a position to move forward with its ideologically driven mandate and agenda. That is the whole focus right now of the government.

I look forward to resuming, and I know all members in the House are looking forward to the remainder of my speech once we come back after question period.

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Cape Breton—Canso has seven minutes remaining in his remarks when we resume debate on the motion and five minutes for questions and comments.

Statements by members, the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[Translation]***PROSTATE CANCER**

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in men. This year alone, 5,100 Quebecers will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and, unfortunately, roughly 840 of them will lose their battle with this terrible disease. However, in some cases the cancer can be treated successfully if it is detected and treated in the early stages. That is why it is essential to increase and support prevention and research efforts to eradicate this terrible disease.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I would like to send a word of encouragement to those who are fighting this cancer and to their loved ones. My sincere thanks go out to all those who spend their days raising public awareness about adopting healthy lifestyles. All the people who devote themselves to this cause, whether they are volunteers, caregivers or doctors, are truly remarkable and we want to acknowledge them today.

* * *

*[English]***TRACK AND FIELD**

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the achievements of Jenna Martin from Bridgewater, Nova Scotia in South Shore—St. Margaret's.

Jenna won the Canadian women's 400-metre title at the national track and field championships this past June in Calgary. She participated in the World Track and Field Championship in South Korea and also finished sixth in the women's 400-metre final at the World University Games in China. She has been an NCAA All-American, as well as a Canadian junior athlete of the year. Now Jenna is preparing to train for the 2012 Olympics in London.

In closing, I would like to congratulate Jenna, as well as her long time coach Charles Scarrow, also from Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. I congratulate Jenna on all her accomplishments so far and wish her the best of luck to bring home the gold for Canada and Nova Scotia in 2012.

* * *

NATIONAL AWARDS

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate some NWT residents who have received national recognition this year.

Fort Smith *Slave River Journal* was awarded the best all-round newspaper from the Canadian Community Newspaper Association in its circulation category.

Dr. Curtis Brown from the South Slave Divisional Education Council was given the Canadian Association of School Administrators Award as the best school superintendent in Canada.

Sylvia Clement, a 29-year-old single mother of two, was awarded the Council of the Federation 2011 Literacy Award for her work.

Di Ann Blesse was the winner of the Canadian Teachers' Federation Outstanding Aboriginal Educator Award.

Paul Bennett, principal of Yellowknife's J.H. Sissons Schools, was chosen as one of Canada's 32 outstanding principals.

Buffalo Airways won two Gemini Awards for the reality show, *Ice Pilots*.

All over the vast NWT, our residents work hard to build our territory. The results are exceptional and these national awards recognize that.

* * *

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new figures from the Mining Association of Canada estimate that approximately \$136 billion worth of investment is projected over the next five years for the Canadian mining industry, including both new projects as well as expansions to existing operations.

Multi-billion dollar investments are planned in virtually every province and territory of Canada. Indeed, global demand for commodities is creating opportunities not seen since the post-war boom of the 1950s.

Canada is among the most attractive jurisdictions in the world for mineral exploration and new mine investment. As this government focuses on the economy and jobs as its number one priority, continuing to work in partnership with the mining industry is one of the ways we can keep Canada's economy strong.

Mining in Canada is truly the \$136 billion opportunity, creating jobs and bringing hope from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. Prostate cancer is

Statements by Members

the most common cancer among men, with over 25,000 new diagnoses this year alone. Of that, 4,100 men will die this year.

Yet prostate cancer is preventable. Early detection and screening can result in a 90% cure rate. However, because this disease is asymptomatic in the earliest stages, regular prostate exams and PSA levels, where appropriate, are essential.

As a physician, I have worked to raise awareness about prostate cancer and to encourage my male patients to have early exams and tests when they reach the age of 40 and yearly afterwards.

There are hereditary factors that can lead to prostate cancer, but there are also dietary and environmental factors that play a role as well.

All men out there over 40 who have not had a prostate exam should take charge of their health and go get a checkup.

* * *

● (1405)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the leader of the Palestinian Authority announced his intention to unilaterally approach the UN Security Council this Friday to seek recognition of a Palestinian state.

Today, Canada's foreign affairs minister is in New York to ensure that Canada's views are widely known. Canada does not see this action as helpful in bringing peace to the region. Such action will make the resumption of peace talks more difficult and will raise expectations in the minds of all Palestinians.

Canada supports a two-state solution achieved through negotiations for a permanent peace. It is well known that the UN will likely veto any application for UN member state status.

Our government encourages the Palestinian Authority to abandon such action and to return to the peace talks.

* * *

[Translation]

KAREL MAYRAND

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with everyone my pride in the remarkable citizen engagement of Mr. Karel Mayrand, who is originally from Rimouski.

Mr. Mayrand is the David Suzuki Foundation's director general for Quebec and was recruited by former vice-president of the United States and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Al Gore, to be a presenter for his Climate Reality Project.

Statements by Members

The only francophone presenter chosen by Mr. Gore, Mr. Mayrand participated in the 24 Hours of Reality event in New York, to make people aware of the serious consequences of climate change and the urgent need to take action to counter its effects. You can watch his presentation, in French, on the Climate Reality Project Canada site.

His background is impressive and inspiring. He wanted to become an agent of change and, through his involvement, effort and perseverance, has achieved that goal and now works with the most influential people in the field.

Congratulations, Mr. Mayrand. We hope that your commitment will set an example for those who also want to make a difference.

* * *

[English]

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is Prostate Cancer Awareness Week.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in men. It is the third leading cause of cancer death and will claim an estimated 4,100 lives this year alone, including many in my hometown of Oshawa. Most prostate cancers can be cured if detected and treated in their earliest stages.

We are extremely proud of our work to accelerate progress in cancer research, prevention and treatment for Canadians. Funding of \$250 million over five years will be renewed for the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to continue its excellent work. Last year alone our government, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, invested an additional \$159 million in cancer research.

Early detection, and leading a healthy, active lifestyle can decrease the risk of developing prostate cancer.

Through the combined efforts of both the government and Canadians we can make a difference and save lives. Please join me in recognizing Prostate Cancer Awareness Week.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can count on this government to keep our streets and communities safe.

As part of our commitment to crack down on crime, our government took the important step of bringing to Canadians' attention the 32 most wanted criminals, including Shameer Allie. This individual had been on the run since January, when CBSA had ordered his deportation after he had been found guilty of numerous criminal offences, including assault.

Despite the opposition's complaints, we went ahead with our approach, and it is delivering results. So far, six of those 32 dangerous criminals have been arrested.

Our government will continue to take action to protect Canadians and to make our streets and communities safer. I know that my constituents in Etobicoke Centre will definitely appreciate this.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for action on high speed rail in Canada.

My former leader and friend, Jack Layton, assigned me the Quebec City to Windsor high speed rail portfolio to increase the use of passenger rail and improve the service in that corridor.

Well known to all, Jack expected us to not just criticize or be in opposition, but to build a plan and see it through.

With that in mind, I have been researching and reaching out, and last week launched the need for speed campaign. My first goal was to determine interest in a Quebec City to Chicago route that would link Canada to the United States. I went to Michigan and met with elected members and bureaucrats alike. With \$200 million in upgrades from Detroit to Chicago currently happening, Americans at all levels of government are interested in a future rail connection with Canada.

In Canada I met with the private sector, elected officials and others who see the merits of higher speed rail. The problem in Canada is that we see study after study, but no action.

I have asked the Minister of Transport to create an inclusive working group of municipalities, provinces and the public and private sectors to develop a long-term business plan, ultimately bringing Canada into the modern rail age.

I miss Jack. He was a big supporter of high speed rail. It is projects like this that keep his legacy alive.

* * *

● (1410)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2 Canadians gave us a strong mandate to keep the streets and communities safe.

As part of that mandate, we made a promise to re-introduce important law and order legislation that would keep Canadians safe from coast to coast to coast, legislation that was opposed by the NDP and the Liberal Party. We said we would pass it within the first 100 sitting days.

I am very proud to say that today the Minister of Justice tabled the Safe Streets and Communities Act, a comprehensive piece of legislation that will keep Canadians safe, legislation that will protect our children from sex offenders, eliminate house arrest and eliminate pardons for sex offenders and give law enforcement officials, courts and victims tools they have told us they need.

We promised Canadians that we would be taking this action, and today we are delivering on that promise. I call upon members of the opposition to support these important law and order measures.

* * *

[Translation]

MARTHE ASSELIN-VAILLANCOURT

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to pay tribute today to Marthe Asselin-Vaillancourt, a pioneer in social involvement in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Ms. Asselin-Vaillancourt's career has been exceptional in many ways. Since 1976, she has been dedicated to the issue of women who are victims of violence. She has been director of a Crime Victims Assistance Centre, co-chair of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, and regional and provincial vice-president of the Association québécoise de la défense des droits des retraités in Jonquière.

I would also like to point out that as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, she was recognized for being the woman who has made the greatest and most consistent contribution over the past 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, as you probably know, her most recent distinction was receiving the Order of Canada.

She is a great woman, whose commitment to her community has been a source of inspiration for over 50 years and will continue to be for future generations. Today, I would like to express my admiration for Ms. Asselin-Vaillancourt. Her contribution to our community is invaluable.

On behalf of the people of Jonquière—Alma, I congratulate Ms. Asselin-Vaillancourt on receiving the Order of Canada and offer my sincere thanks for all of the work that she has done—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Prince Albert.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is squarely focused on what matters most to Canadians, jobs and economic growth.

Canada's economy has created nearly 60,000 net new jobs since July 2009, the strongest job growth on record in the G7. We are working hard to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and its job-creating measures, like the hiring credit for small businesses.

The global economic recovery, especially in the U.S. and Europe, does remain fragile. The last thing Canada's economy needs now are the massive NDP and Liberal job-killing tax hikes that would kill jobs and set Canadian families back.

Staying the course with our prudent low-tax plan will support Canada in completing the economic recovery and help create jobs for Canadians.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is prostate cancer awareness week, and I would like to take the time to mention the 25,000 men who will be diagnosed in 2011 as well as the 4,000 of them that we could lose to this disease.

I think about the families and friends of those who will have to face this immense challenge. In particular I am thinking about our political family, which suffered such a huge loss this summer.

But I cannot help but think about the Canadian men and women who participate in initiatives such as Movember and other fundraisers. Because, despite all of the great accomplishments, we must still work to raise awareness amongst men 50 and older. We encourage them to talk to their health care professionals to learn more about the disease.

We demonstrated it just this morning in Parliament, where I had a screening test. With research, awareness and the generosity of Canadians, we will one day beat this disease and improve the lives of our families.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the year since the Prime Minister launched the Muskoka initiative at the G8, Canada has worked toward real results, saving the lives of mothers and children around the world.

‘The lives of countless women and their newborns depend on simple solutions: strengthening health systems; training midwives; fighting childhood diseases and improving nutrition.

Canada is a leader on the humanitarian stage and keeps its commitments when it makes a pledge. We recognize that we must entrench accountability in everything we do and deliver on our promises.

The World Health Organization and the World Bank estimate that by 2015 the G8 Muskoka initiative will prevent the deaths of 1.3 million children under the age of 5, and prevent the deaths of 64,000 mothers.

I stand to applaud the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Cooperation for leading the world and saving the lives of the most vulnerable mothers and newborn children.

* * *

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, prostate cancer will afflict one in seven men in this House of Commons and across Canada. This disease is the most common cancer among Canadian men. As many as 25,000 Canadians are diagnosed with it every single year. Last year, our friend and colleague, Jack Layton, was one of them and faced the disease with courage and determination.

Oral Questions

As a cancer survivor myself, I joined Jack in encouraging Canadian men over 40 to get checked, because the earlier it is detected the better chance they have of beating it.

September is prostate cancer month. This year the Prostate Cancer Canada Network wants us men to know that it is our time as men to take charge of our own health. I ask all members of this House and all men in Canada to join in the fight against prostate cancer.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the New Democratic Party apparently has a miracle solution to get the economy back on track: tax increases and irresponsible spending. She is wrong. Canada's economy does not need job-killing tax hikes, nor does it need spending that would slow the economic recovery and mean a step backwards for Canadian families.

The global economic recovery remains fragile. We must not underestimate the impact of problems beyond our borders on the Canadian economy.

The NDP is acting irresponsibly by claiming that tax increases are the answer. On the contrary, they would jeopardize our recovery.

This is just one more troubling example of how ill-equipped the NDP is to govern Canada. Our government will stay on course with our prudent plan to keep taxes low, thereby bolstering our economic recovery.

Our Conservative government remains firmly focused on what matters to Canadians: jobs and economic growth.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservative government, President Obama gets it. He knows that his government has to invest in the economy because the private sector is not doing so. The same is true here in Canada. The Conservatives are making bad choices. The tax cuts for big corporations and big banks have not created jobs.

Why is the government refusing to face facts and accept that it is up to the government to stimulate the economy and create jobs?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave us a strong mandate and we are focused on economic growth and job creation. Again today, the IMF has predicted that Canada will lead the G7 economies. This shows that our plan is the right plan. We will keep taxes low. I want to remind hon. members that 600,000 net new jobs have been created since we came to power. We will continue to implement the budget. There will be a new small business hiring tax credit. That is what creates wealth.

[English]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is more bad economic news. The Conference Board of Canada dropped Canada's rating on income equality. The middle class is falling further behind. Inequality has increased in the past 10 years. Surprise, surprise; it is the same 10 years of the big tax cuts for big corporations.

Is this not another example of the Conservatives' economic inaction plan?

• (1420)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on what actually matters to Canadians: creating jobs and economic growth. Just today the IMF forecasted that Canada's overall economic growth will lead the G7 over the next two years. This is another example of our economic leadership, which includes nearly 600,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession in July 2009, which is the strongest job record in the G7.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' economic action plan is simply not working. The unemployment rate went up last month. Canada is on the brink of another recession. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps growing. Yesterday the Prime Minister showed that he not only does not understand the principle of social justice, but he refuses to see the economic dangers on the horizon, as they were in 2008.

When will he open his eyes and take action?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our economic action plan is working very well. Again, some 600,000 net new jobs have been created since the end of the recession. If that is a failure, then it is hard to say what plan would work better. The worst part is that the NDP voted against the plan.

We will stay the course. The state of our country's public finances is the most enviable of the G7 countries. This shows that our plan of keeping taxes low and emphasizing economic growth and job creation is a winning formula.

Mrs. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, inequality is not only a moral outrage in any democracy, but it also makes for a bad economic foundation. Inequality means lower family incomes, young people and workers not being given the opportunity to pursue their studies, consumers spending less, and fewer good jobs being created.

Why does this government refuse to take economic inequality seriously? Why does it refuse to act?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the most important equality plan for Canadians is a job. We have created more than 600,000 net new jobs in Canada since the end of the recession. Canadians gave us a strong mandate in the general election to protect and complete Canada's economic recovery.

The way to go is not what the member opposite suggests. It is not to run up more deficits and more debt. We see clearly around the world what that brings down on countries that follow that course, including the course recommended by the official opposition of a \$10 billion tax hike in Canada.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly Conservatives are out of touch. Canadian households have never been so deeply in debt, never. Scotiabank says Canada will likely be the first country to go back into a recession. Now the International Monetary Fund projects Canada's unemployment rate will keep rising and is downgrading Canada's economic prospects.

When will the Minister of Finance finally wake up to our economic reality, or is he happy just to watch from the sidelines as Canadians face another economic downturn?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there the member goes again, bad mouthing our country and trying to reduce confidence in our economy. In fact, Canadian consumers have confidence in our economy and that is why we have economic growth.

If the member opposite bothered to read the report the IMF issued today, she would see that according to the IMF we are going to have the best economic growth in the G7 over the course of the next two years. That is because we have sound fiscal and economic fundamentals, but she would have us move away from that.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the warm applause from the Conservative Party.

The Minister of Finance has to face the harsh fact that the IMF report today, which he has quoted very selectively from, states very clearly that the IMF is changing its growth projections for Canada. He has to recognize very clearly that the IMF said something else quite significant at the end of its report and he said that it is precisely because Canada has the fiscal room to move that it is important for Canada to look hard at the need for flexibility in the face of changed circumstances. This is where we part company with the government. Will the minister not admit that the world is—

● (1425)

The Speaker: I will have to stop the hon. member there.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the IMF report set out the anticipated rates of growth in Canada at 2.1% in 2011 and 1.9% in 2012, which would be the best in the G7 over the course of the next two years. The IMF "Fiscal Monitor" also noted that Canada will continue to have by far the lowest total government net debt to GDP ratio in the entire G7: 33.3% in 2016 compared to—and I know the member opposite loves debt—the G7 average of 92.9%.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the love in the minister's answer.

What I would like to say to the minister is very simple: circumstances have changed. The circumstances relevant to the minister's budget are no longer relevant today. That is the problem. That is the challenge facing Canada. Yes, we have some flexibility. We do have some leeway, but will the minister take advantage of that leeway? That is the important question we are asking him.

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that if we are faced with a large external shock to our economy from Europe or elsewhere that we would, of course, be pragmatic and flexible. We have said that before and I say it again here today. We would act as we have acted before.

What we would not do is run the Government of Canada like the member opposite ran the government of Ontario between 1990 and 1995. He ran the province of Ontario into massive debt and deficit from which that province is still trying to recover.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the love in that response, but let us just look at the facts of what the government is doing.

It says that it is focusing on the economy and jobs. We have just been faced with two pieces of legislation that have already dramatically increased the size of the debt and deficit in Canada, and according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, they are going to increase Canada's debt by \$15 billion over the next five years. That is the agenda which is being foisted upon the country by a government that claims to be worried about the economy.

The government has to show some flexibility and leadership in the face of these changed circumstances.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are on track to balance the budget. We ran substantial deficits in 2009 and 2010. We have reduced that deficit by about half and we will continue to do that.

This is in stark contrast to what the hon. member opposite did in the province of Ontario over five years. Year after year he was in denial and continued raising the deficit, accumulating a massive public debt in the province of Ontario.

We are not going to go that route. We are going to stay the course and go back to a balanced budget.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the President of the Treasury Board. I am not going to ask him a question about the G8 Summit today. I hope that this will motivate him to stand and speak.

A total of \$20 million was granted to a private company to study the cuts to public services. That is \$90,000 a day being wasted! The President of the Treasury Board is throwing taxpayers' money out the window while cutting jobs.

Why is the government paying contractors top dollar to do its dirty work?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the end of the recession, 600,000 jobs have been created here in Canada. Canadians gave us a strong mandate to protect and pursue Canada's economic recovery. While the opposition is calling for tax increases that would result in the loss of jobs and harm the economy, the government has a plan to keep taxes low and focus on job creation for Canadians and economic growth.

We know that irresponsible spending and out-of-control debt are the main problems other countries are facing today. That is why the demands of the opposition will not be met.

• (1430)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am going to have to respond to the spokesperson for the President of the Treasury Board. The reality is that the cuts to public services will be carried out by private consultants and will cost taxpayers \$20 million. As we saw with the F-35s, the Conservatives do not really like the tendering process.

When the public interest is not consistent with their ideology, they forget about the public interest. Can the President of the Treasury Board explain to us why this contract was awarded without a tendering process?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false and Treasury Board's involvement with the private sector is an integral part of our plan to ensure that Canada avoids the economic and financial problems that have heavily hit many of the other countries in the world. Once again, fortunately, 600,000 new jobs have been created since the end of the recession thanks to the good work of the world's best Minister of Finance, as he was named last year.

*[English]***SERVICE CANADA**

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are spending \$90,000 a day for an outside consultant to plan cuts and that is their explanation. Canadians will not buy it. A day's pay for the consultant is more than a year's pay for front-line Service Canada workers. While Conservatives throw money away on high-priced consultants, they are forcing Canadians to accept cuts to the programs and services they rely on.

When will the government come clean on its cuts?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our government we have created about 600,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession which, as I said earlier, is the best record among the advanced economies. The opposition, on the other hand, is calling for higher taxes which would, of course, kill job creation in Canada and is the wrong way to go.

With respect to spending, we certainly are opposed to reckless spending. I think Canadians expect us to be prudent in the way we look at spending in Canada, so we are through the deficit reduction action plan. Private sector advice is valuable, important and essential and it is part of our task of appropriately—

The Speaker: Order. I will stop the minister there as his time has expired.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, warning signs about a possible recession are everywhere and yet Conservatives want to cut the front-line workers that help Canadians who have lost their jobs. This is not the time to cut services at EI processing centres. When times are tough for Canadians they deserve to have those services to help them.

When will the minister take the service part of Service Canada seriously and stop cutting workers at EI centres?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get her facts correct. Front-line service at Service Canada will not be affected with the plan we are bringing in. What we are doing is taking the backroom operations where EI gets processed and making it more responsive to the needs of Canadians.

Right now, most of the processing is manual paperwork. We are in the 21st century. We need to automate that. We need to make sure that the services we are delivering are efficient, effective and responsive to Canadian needs. We are protecting front-line service delivery.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, the Conservative slogan in Quebec was "Notre région au pouvoir", or our region in power. The reality is that if you are not in power, the government will make cuts in your region. This summer, it announced that 600 jobs would be cut in employment insurance claim processing centres in Canada. These cuts will hurt the isolated rural regions of eastern Canada.

Why reduce employment insurance services when the ranks of the unemployed are swelling and the economic situation is deteriorating?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the global recession there was a large increase in the number of employment insurance claims. We responded by hiring a number of people to process the claims. We succeeded. Claimants received their benefits in a reasonable time. However, the good news is that more Canadians than before have found work and we no longer have to deal with so many claims. Therefore, we have adjusted our staff.

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when people lose their jobs they do not receive free Internet access as a bonus. Not everyone can file their claims over the Internet.

It is interesting to note that two Service Canada centres that were opened in Conservative ridings in Nova Scotia will remain open. Meanwhile, bigger centres in opposition ridings will close.

Will the government stop favouring Conservative ridings and start serving Canadians fairly?

● (1435)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just explained that some people were hired on a temporary basis. That was understood at the time by those people and the unions. The demand for employment insurance has decreased. Consequently, we have to reduce the number of employees and make sound use of taxpayers' money. That is what we are doing. I can assure the member that the service provided to the public will not be affected.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if cuts are made to Canada's ozone monitoring network, we will lose a third of the world's resources to monitor the growing hole in the ozone layer.

This network has been collecting research data for 45 years. It is a key player in international efforts to protect the ozone layer.

How will this government explain to other countries that Canada is withdrawing from an important monitoring mechanism that is provided for in the Montreal Protocol?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague is aware, since we took power, Canada has created nearly 600,000 net new jobs.

[English]

I must say that while *Nature* is a worthy journal, the story to which she refers is completely without facts or science. We are not cutting any ozone-monitoring services or closing the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre, which Canada has hosted for years. However, we are optimizing and streamlining the way we monitor and measure ozone, making the best use of taxpayers' dollars.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister says he is not cutting jobs with ozone-related research and yesterday he told the House that cuts to Environment Canada will only affect "surplus" workers. It is hard to imagine where he is finding surplus when key programs like ozone monitoring are now often run by only one person.

Oral Questions

Before we take his word on what a "surplus" worker is, will the minister tell the House what analysis his department has done that shows the actual impacts of these cuts?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how I can be much more clear. I have said we are not closing any of our ozone-monitoring services or closing the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre.

As we are doing across government, we at Environment Canada will be taking a close look at all of our spending through the next year and the results of our deficit reduction action plan will be revealed in next year's budget.

* * *

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, documents show that the Auditor General was misled on key facts surrounding the G8 spending. For example, who handled the intake of applications? It was Sondra Reid, the minister's constituency assistant. Who handled questions from municipalities? It was David Pearson, the minister's political right hand. Who secured the cash? It was Mr. Muskoka Moneybags himself who bragged to mayors that he could secure money personally from the Prime Minister for a program that did not exist.

His fingerprints are all over this file. When will he take responsibility for this abuse of public trust?

The Speaker: I would encourage the hon. member to abstain from making those types of derogatory comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely incorrect. The facts have not changed. The Auditor General looked at this recently and made some helpful observations about how we could move forward in a more transparent and clear way.

The Auditor General also made some observations with respect to the administration of this program.

However, here is the good news. The good news is every dollar is accounted for. All 22 projects came in on or under budget. In fact, the program itself was underspent by some \$5 million.

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AIR CANADA

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite ongoing talks at Air Canada, the minister has leapt into the fray and indicated she would order flight attendants back to work, giving an unmistakable preference to management negotiators.

Oral Questions

Clearly, the government is ready to use this opportunity to again undermine employee pension security, just as it did earlier this year. Pension security must be part of any plan to stimulate this economy.

Why is the government so eager to compromise the pension security of over 6,800 Air Canada workers?

• (1440)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our labour minister has been front and centre in ensuring that whatever happens the parties involved in this discussion continue their discussions. The pensions seem to be at the middle of it. We hope they can settle. However, it is very important that we ensure the economy is not negatively impacted. The pensions will be dealt with in due time.

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report on the G8 legacy fund said that no public servants were involved. We now know that is wrong. Employees of FedNor were involved. Clearly, somebody misled the Auditor General.

I have a motion at the government operations committee this afternoon calling for an investigation into this matter.

Will the government, which rode into power on the white horse of accountability, support my motion, or does it think now that it has a majority, accountability no longer matters?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again the facts have not changed. This issue was thoroughly heard. The Auditor General had all the government information.

However, let me give members more good news on this.

Rehabilitating the airport in North Bay, fixing up the provincial highway and building a community centre that was used during the summit are all public infrastructure projects that added great value to the municipalities and were recommended by the municipalities themselves.

[Translation]

SALES TAX HARMONIZATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respectfully ask the Minister of Industry if he was of sound mind when, on September 12, he said that the Conservatives broke their promise to Quebecers to compensate the Quebec government with \$2.2 billion by September 15 because the province is refusing to tax items such as books, baby feeding supplies and diapers.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, a joint press release was issued by the Province of Quebec and the Government of Canada. This shows that we have been negotiating on this issue in good faith from the outset. Things are moving forward and are going well, as the finance ministers for both Quebec and Canada have said. It is time to stop nitpicking and look at the result. It is on the way.

Those members over there were in power for 13 years and always said that the sales tax could not be harmonized. We get things done, and we will keep our promise.

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whether it is the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto or Montreal's Champlain Bridge, Canada's major infrastructure is crumbling, leaving too many Canadians with a white-knuckle drive to work.

At the same time, the IMF said today it predicts Canada's unemployment rate is going to rise above 7.5%.

Infrastructure means jobs. Is it not time for the government to move Canada forward and invest in job creation and public safety?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government in history has invested more in Canada's infrastructure than our present government. In budget 2011 we continued to build on our unprecedented commitment by making the annual \$2 billion gas tax fund permanent. It is very important for municipalities, and I think the opposition voted against it.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Torontonians are about to lose a thousand jobs in the public transit system. That means longer waits for buses and trains, and fare increases. Meanwhile, in Calgary trains are literally breaking down. Commuters across Canada are stuck in traffic jams. The mayor of Calgary, who happens to be in town this week, has long called for a federal transit strategy.

Could the minister explain why Canada is the only OECD or G7 country without a national transit plan or strategy?

• (1445)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have to respect our partners. Municipalities and provinces are responsible for transit issues and we respect that. We do not have to tell Toronto's city councillors how to manage the transit in their own city. We have to respect them. We are there to support them with the money of the population of Canada in Toronto. That is what we will continue to do.

[Translation]

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities told the House, and I quote, "...we have invested...in Montreal bridges, mainly in the Champlain Bridge, to ensure the smooth flow of traffic..." Clearly, the minister should revise his strategy. For 40 years now, we have been hearing that the bus lane is just a temporary solution.

When will we see a sustainable solution for motorists, public transportation users and truck drivers?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if public transportation is a priority for the official opposition, I would like my colleague to explain why the NDP voted against the Toronto Rocket project, against the Métrobus 803 project in Quebec City, against the Evergreen Line project in Vancouver and against a number of other projects. We will continue to do the work, to do what is necessary for public transportation and to ensure that all federal infrastructures are kept in good working order, while respecting provincial jurisdictions.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to understand the scope of the problem: a highway is collapsing, a bridge is urgently shut down. It is clear that this government simply does not have an infrastructure modernization plan that is focused on job creation. Patching up a bridge that is at the end of its useful life is not a sustainable strategy nor is it a safe one.

When will the minister understand that if he wants to ensure the smooth flow of traffic, a new bridge is needed?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we were to have a new bridge or other infrastructure, it would take seven to ten years to complete. How does my colleague think that new infrastructure would resolve Montreal's traffic problems today? That is unbelievable. We must ensure that the infrastructure in place now is still able to endure the load of existing traffic for a number of years and that all of the options are considered regarding future infrastructure.

* * *

[English]

LIBYA

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Libya this past summer has seen the toppling of the Gadhafi regime and the emergence of a real democratic hope. However, despite these gains we recognize that the situation does remain unstable.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on the situation in Libya?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister attended the high-level meeting on Libya at the United Nations

Oral Questions

chaired by the Secretary-General. Canada has been at the forefront of the international effort to protect civilians in Libya against the oppressive Gadhafi regime.

Canada stands ready to support the new Libyan government through the UN coordinated efforts committed to helping the people of Libya.

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TAX HARMONIZATION

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of B.C. have spoken loud and clear. In a historic referendum they rejected the HST tax grab that the Prime Minister rammed through the House. Now the Conservatives are planning to punish British Columbians.

Forcing them to pay back over a billion dollars is a spiteful reaction to the province's fair and democratic decision. When will the government agree to respect voters and treat B.C. voters fairly?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member opposite knows, there is an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia.

HST is a provincial responsibility. I met yesterday with the minister of finance of British Columbia. He reported to me, of course, the results of the referendum there. We are now working on the exit strategy since this is a provincial responsibility and the provincial government will not be continuing with the HST.

● (1450)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this money has already been invested in health care, education and other family priorities. Forcing the province to pay it back will hurt very important services and create a hole in the province's budget.

The government needs to do the right thing, the fair thing. Will the government drop its plan to punish British Columbians for rejecting its HST?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the HST is a provincial responsibility. There is an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia. The agreement has provisions with respect to repayment of the sum that was advanced by the Government of Canada. That sum was advanced as part of the agreement to proceed with the HST. The province is not proceeding with that now. It follows that honouring the agreement will require repayment.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about honouring and keeping promises. In the Conservative Party platform unveiled on April 8 and in numerous statements made by the Prime Minister and his Quebec lieutenant, the Minister of Industry, during the election campaign, they promised to compensate Quebec with respect to the GST by September 15. It was a formal promise.

Oral Questions

In a joint press release issued on September 14, the finance ministers from Quebec and Canada had to admit that the promise would not be kept. What is the problem?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had a lengthy series of discussions with the Government of Quebec with respect to the HST and those discussions have continued.

The minister of finance of Quebec and I agreed a week or so ago that we would continue the discussions toward the end of September. I am hopeful and relatively confident that we will arrive at an agreement.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who is in charge in the finance minister's shop? During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised, with his hand on his heart, that Quebec would get the \$2.2 billion it has been owed for ages.

The two finance ministers say that there is progress, but we have yet to see anything.

Can the Minister of Finance confirm that the \$2.2 billion that the federal government owes Quebec is being held up in his department?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite is familiar with negotiations.

We are negotiating with the Government of Quebec. We need to agree on the terms with respect to the HST and then the payment would flow after that. This is entirely normal. It is the procedure we are following. There is good will on both sides. We will carry on with the discussions with the goal of reaching an agreement by the end of September.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the third time, I have a question for the Minister of Transport about his government's rail service review, which is almost a year old. It said that the shippers of grain, oil seeds and special crops, forest products, minerals and the like were getting very bad service from the railways at a very high cost and it called for new legislation to enforce binding contracts on the railways.

Will that legislation be introduced and enacted in this calendar year? For the third time, yes or no?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March of this year, our government announced a comprehensive strategy that responds to the findings of the review.

Our government is following up on its commitment to improve the performance of the rail-based supply chain. We will soon be naming the facilitator and the review process will be officially launched.

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the buy American provisions and the United States country of origin labelling provisions have been found by the WTO to discriminate against Canadian livestock exports.

Without question, this protectionist action has cost the Canadian livestock industry billions of dollars.

Just when will the government stand up for Canadians against U.S. protectionism? Is the minister now prepared to serve notice to the U.S. and demand compensation for Canada's livestock industry?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member for Malpeque slept through the whole country of origin labelling WTO challenge that we had or not.

That panel has released an interim report that was very favourable to Canada. The Americans are now negotiating with us in good faith on a way forward. We are hopeful that we can settle this very quickly and continue to move on.

I hope the member stays awake for the good result we will have.

* * *

● (1455)

AIR CANADA

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Canada close to another recession, one would think the government would have better things to do than tamper with the rights of working people, but that is just what it is doing.

Air Canada says that it is close to a deal. The union says that it is close to a deal. Both sides know it is better for business if a collective agreement is reached around the bargaining table.

If the government is so worried about the economy, why will it not leave Canadian workers alone and start focusing on the economy?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, exactly what we are doing is focusing on the economy, as the hon. member pointed out. We introduced the notice of our intention for back to work legislation if the two parties are unable to reach a deal, as the member pointed out. I am very optimistic that they are close to a deal and I hope that I will have something more to say later on today.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, employees have the right to negotiate their collective agreement. They have the right to use pressure tactics. It is called a right for a reason. Threatening workers with special legislation takes their rights away. The economy is not just big business profits; it is also workers' salaries and pensions.

Will the minister stop interfering in the Air Canada negotiations and, instead, encourage the parties to negotiate an agreement that will be acceptable to them both?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very true that the best deal the parties can get is one that they conclude themselves, which is why our officials are still at the table sincerely trying to help the two parties find their way to a deal or to a process to a deal.

The reason that we introduced the notice of back to work legislation yesterday was to protect the economy and to protect the Canadian travelling public, of which 65,000 people could be stranded on the first day of a strike.

We are always considering the needs of the Canadian economy but, most important, the Canadian public as well.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the IMF again reminded the world that the global economy remains turbulent. Now more than ever our government has to stay focused on what matters, the economy.

While our government is focused on just that through our low tax plan for jobs and growth, the NDPs' plan would hike taxes on job creating businesses by \$10 billion a year, killing jobs at the worst possible moment. That is the wrong plan for the economy and for Canadian jobs.

Could the Minister of Finance outline why we need to stay the course on our plan?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Centre for that brilliant question about the news that we had just today from the IMF.

Our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians, which is economic growth, of course, and the creation of jobs.

The IMF today forecasted Canada would have the strongest economic growth in the G7 over the course of the next two years.

We are faced with turbulence from abroad of course. We are faced with a serious situation with respect to sovereign debt in several European countries and the banking consequences of that, particularly with European banks. We are faced with turbulence from outside.

However, as the IMF said today, we have relatively healthy economic fundamentals here in—

The Speaker: Order, please. I will have to stop the minister again.

The hon. member for St. Paul's.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Walk 4 Justice concluded its cross-country journey to raise awareness of the hundreds of aboriginal mothers, aunties, daughters and sisters who are missing or have been murdered.

Oral Questions

The government has failed to provide justice for the victims, healing for the families or an end to the violence.

If the government wants to be tough on crime, then it should call a public inquiry. If it wants to prevent violence against women, then it should call a public inquiry.

How many more aboriginal women need to die before the government takes this issue as the serious crisis that it is?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we take this issue very seriously. The fact is that no government in the history of this country has stood up for the rights of victims more than this government.

When it comes to aboriginal women in particular, we have been working with law enforcement agencies across the country. As the member knows, the RCMP now has a new Centre for Missing Persons. Law enforcement databases have been updated to investigate missing and murdered aboriginal women specifically. We are also boosting victims' services across the country, particularly in aboriginal communities.

* * *

● (1500)

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world. We do not dismantle a \$6 billion a year corporation without significant closing costs. The KPMG is actually set at \$500 million.

In this era of high deficits, how can the Conservatives defend borrowing \$500 million they do not have just to indulge the foolish, free market flight of fancy of a feckless Minister of Agriculture?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, getting passed the political hackery, the reality is that Canadians gave us a strong mandate on May 2. We continue to move forward on an issue on which we campaigned long and hard in some six elections in which I have been involved.

However, I will quote someone who said, "When the government is intending to change legislation, I honestly do not see the grounds for going to court. The government has the right to change legislation".

Do members know who said that? It was the member for Winnipeg Centre.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the U.S. administration proposed the inclusion of buy American provisions as part of their draft infrastructure funding proposal.

Routine Proceedings

Our government moved quickly on the matter, raising concerns with the American administration to defend Canadian workers and businesses.

This is what the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses had to say:

Open bilateral trading arrangements are vital to SMEs on both sides of the border. CFIB is pleased to see the Canadian government moving quickly on this matter...

Would the hard-working Minister of International Trade explain why the government is raising such strong concerns with the proposed legislation.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for his hard work on the international trade committee. He is doing great work there.

I have raised our concerns regarding the draft buy American provisions with Ambassador Jacobson, as well as with Ambassador Kirk, and we have triggered formal consultations on the matter. I reminded the ambassadors that, if enacted, the proposed restrictions would send a negative signal to governments around the world that trade restrictions are an acceptable policy choice. They are not.

Our government will continue to advocate opportunities for Canadian workers and businesses alike through free and open trade.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have communicated repeatedly with the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities regarding commercial float planes taking off at Lac-à-la-Tortue and on the Saint-Maurice River, but to no avail. The mayor of Shawinigan has also been trying for months to reach the minister about this matter.

What measures does the minister plan to take regarding the illegal commercial flights that are causing noise pollution and threatening the safety of my constituents?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, such situations come under the authority of local officials. People in the community set up anti-noise committees and committees to improve the quality of life and the environment. It is up to the local people to reach an agreement amongst themselves. Various points of view have been put forward, but from a Transport Canada perspective, no rules have been broken. It is up to the people of the community to come up with solutions. Transport Canada officials have already attended meetings. There are many mayors and many Canadian municipalities, and we could not possibly speak to each of them whenever they like.

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JUSTICE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the omnibus bill they introduced today, the Conservatives are clearly trying to impose their regressive and ideological vision of justice.

They want to put more young people in prison, deny offenders who have redeemed themselves the pardon they deserve, prevent the justice system from imposing conditional sentences that would allow for rehabilitation, and fill Quebec's prisons.

How can the minister justify not only imposing values on Quebecers that are not their own, but also sticking them with the bill to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's mandate from Canadians is to keep our streets and communities safe by moving quickly to reintroduce comprehensive law and order legislation.

The government is taking action to protect families, stand up for victims and hold criminals accountable.

I would ask that the member really reconsider whether she thinks that those who sexually abuse children should in fact be entitled to a pardon. Our government believes that is inappropriate. They are a danger to children, and she should be protecting children.

• (1505)

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House and I should like to move concurrence at this time.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my point of order relates to the conduct of hon. members in question period yesterday and today. I regret to raise this, but I am hoping that by mentioning it early enough in this fall session, we might remember the good intentions when we first met after the election at the beginning of this 41st Parliament.

I would like to remind members of Standing Order 16, which says when a member is speaking, no member shall interrupt him or her. I also would like to reference Standing Order 18, which says that no member shall use offensive words against either the House or any member thereof.

It is not one or two members who have fallen off the wagon, shall I say. There has been a collective falling off the wagon. I could barely hear the member for Toronto Centre when he was speaking and I could barely hear the member for Vancouver East when she was speaking.

I would like your ruling on this, Mr. Speaker. It is a legitimate point of order that members must restrain themselves and experience the kind of decorum that we once so fervently hoped for in the House.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this matter. Of course, I always do my best to make sure that members can be heard both when they are posing and answering questions and I will continue to do that over the next few weeks.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-4. We have already had the opportunity to discuss this type of bill in the House. It was called Bill C-49. What always fascinates me about the Conservative government's approach, and not in the best sense of the term—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I ask that hon. members continue their conversations outside the House. We have resumed debate and I am having a hard time hearing the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who has the floor.

Government Orders

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, thank you for intervening, especially after the leader of the Green Party rose on a point of order to say that people were heckling and making noise while hon. members were making speeches or asking questions. Thank you for your intervention. Personally, it does not bother me that much. I am used to hearing all that, but I would indeed appreciate it if things were a bit quieter.

I was saying that what fascinates me about the way the government introduces bills is the titles. The short title of Bill C-4 is pure demagoguery. I would even say that introducing a bill to attack a given problem is a way of misleading the public. The vast majority of Canadians will not read the bill, which is quite natural, because they have other things to do besides reading a stack of bills as they are not legislators. Nevertheless, they will read some excerpts in the media and on the Internet. However, they will not necessarily have the entire bill on hand. They often go no further than the title. That is why I have often called this government the marketing government. The purpose of marketing is to sell a certain product and to a certain extent that is what is being done here. The government is saying that this is what it wants to do about refugees and that the bill will prevent smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system. If a referendum were held, I think everyone would agree. Everyone would agree with the short title. However, when we read the bill, we see that there is a problem.

We all remember the last election campaign and a Conservative ad — which even targeted the Bloc Québécois—that showed a large, listing, rusty vessel like the Titanic, with a lot of people on board. The invaders were coming. They waged a campaign of fear about various issues, such as the crime rate and refugees, and it was always fear of the other that dominated. That has been this government's *modus operandi* since it was elected, both with a minority and with a majority.

The major difference evident since the beginning of the session and with the adoption of special bills, particularly in the case of the postal strike, is that they are going to do what they want. Naturally, we will do everything in our power to make the public aware of what the government wants to do when it does not make sense. I believe that this bill falls into that category.

The short title does not really indicate what the bill is about. The Bloc Québécois already came out against Bill C-49 when it was introduced for the first time in the House. Bill C-49 was the predecessor of Bill C-4.

In fact, while the government says it is cracking down on human smugglers, it is instead punishing people fleeing persecution, including children. I heard the earlier response given by the Minister of Public Safety, who introduced the bill. He keeps saying that we need to protect the children. Obviously. None of us got elected by saying we did not want to protect children.

Government Orders

When people are smuggled into the country, by boat or some other means, obviously they often bring their children. At least that is what we see in many cases. They are all in the same boat, if you will forgive the pun. The Canadian government is going to welcome them, but not exactly in the way they imagined. So it is misleading to give the bill this title. Lastly, we know very well that real refugees will be treated like common criminals. That is what this bill will do. The Conservatives are once again using a specific example from recent events to advance their law and order agenda, even though the measures they are proposing will not change anything at all about the specific situation.

The example given is this: on August 13, 2010, 492 Sri Lankans arrived in Canada on board the *MV Sun Sea*. When all of this hit the media, the Conservative government promised to tighten the law in order to discourage human smugglers wanting to organize more shipments to Canada. When the Tamil immigrants arrived, the federal government indicated that the ship's passengers included human trafficking criminals and members of the Tamil Tigers, which is considered to be a terrorist group under Canadian law.

• (1510)

There is another example. Some of the 76 other Tamils from Sri Lanka who arrived on the *Ocean Lady* in 2009 and claimed refugee protection remained behind bars for over six months. None of them were recognized as being members of the Tamil Tigers. They were finally freed when the government determined that they did not pose a threat to national security.

The Conservatives are doing whatever they want. People's fear is allowing the Conservative government to pass almost any bill that tightens the rules, and the government is jumping in with both feet. We are not against laws that ensure that smugglers are held criminally responsible for what they have been doing. These individuals do not deserve to be treated like honest people; quite the opposite is true. That is not the problem. The problem is that this bill will allow the government to completely disregard the rights of people who, for the most part, are real refugees and victims of persecution. These people often arrive with their children and they are put in prison by the military. This is a serious problem.

The Bloc Québécois opposes any new refugee category that would be justified only by the manner in which refugee claimants arrive. The fact that some refugee claimants arrive in a group does not mean that they are not legitimate refugees. In our opinion, a new category that puts even heavier burdens on refugees would be prejudicial. Unfortunately, that is what Bill C-4 would do.

One of the consequences of this bill is that refugee claimants who arrive in a group can be automatically imprisoned for a maximum of 12 months with no possibility of disputing their arrest. One year; that is nothing to scoff at. That is called an arbitrary arrest. People arrive by boat in a group and, right away, they can be put in prison for a period of 12 months and that is it. They do not have any rights. Often, these people are penniless and vulnerable. They are not familiar with our laws. In many cases, they do not even know the language. They managed to escape, to save themselves from extremely difficult conditions. Often, they were persecuted in their country. When they arrive, we welcome them by putting them in prison.

This is a matter of fundamental human rights and democracy, specifically, the right to liberty.

Not only would this illegal immigration bill violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but it would also violate Canada's international obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This bill would violate at least three treaties that exist to protect fundamental human rights.

If only for that, we should look carefully at this issue and realize that we must revise this bill, which is nothing but smoke and mirrors. We believe that the existing legislation, if it were properly enforced, is sufficient to deal with the arrival of ships. That is what experts in the field already confirmed, when the first Bill C-49 was introduced.

I do not understand why the bill has returned in the same form, with a few minor esthetic changes, when we know very well that it poses some very serious problems. That is why we will oppose this bill.

• (1515)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska on his remarks. I would like to know more about the way in which the provisions of this bill would infringe on the basic rights of the people who could be victimized. Can the hon. member give us some examples of the basic rights that would be affected by this bill?

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very pertinent question.

I have already mentioned that there are several conventions that Canada will quite simply be treating with contempt if this bill is passed. The real problem—and this is what I had prepared for the continuation of my speech—lies with the countries where the basic rights of some people are often violated, leaving them with no choice but to leave because their lives and their well-being are in danger. This is where a generous foreign policy and generous international aid become important, as does the effective promotion to foreign governments of respect for international conventions, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That is the answer to the hon. member's question. What is at stake here is nothing less than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In a quite arbitrary fashion, we are going to take people who claim to be refugees—and that determination is not to be made the moment they arrive, because it is impossible to decide that these people are actually criminals rather than refugees—we are going to detain them, put them in prison and deprive them of all their basic rights just because they came in a group. That is the problem.

• (1520)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question about Canadians' reaction to refugees in Canada.

Government Orders

I remember a situation, about 10 years ago, where a refugee ship arrived on the coast of Nova Scotia. Many people from the village, near the small town of Chester, I believe, went to the shore with hot tea and coats in order to help those people who had no clothes and no food. That was a truly Canadian response. However, Canadians' response to MV *Sun Sea* was a bit different when the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Justice said that there might be terrorists aboard.

I am a little worried. What is the reaction toward legitimate refugees who are going to be detained with their families for one year under this bill? How does it reflect the generosity of Canadians? I think that is how Canadians would truly respond to young people threatened with political sanctions in their countries.

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

Therein lies the problem. We have always said that the values of this Conservative government do not reflect Quebecers' values or, in many cases, Canadian values. She gives the example where people, the general public, welcomed refugees in a very humane way. That is what she described. This is not the image that the Government of Canada is going to give to rest of the world with Bill C-4.

I am also reminded of when I was younger and what we called the boat people arrived from Vietnam. They were at my school and in my class in Victoriaville. They came from Vietnam and integrated. They were refugees. I do not think that the solution or the way to welcome these people at the time would have been to take them, put them in prison because they arrived in a group and immediately and arbitrarily regard them as criminals. That is not the way to do things. Obviously, we want to avoid having individuals from terrorist or criminal groups turning up here and leading others to believe they are refugees. This happens in close to 2% of cases. Of course there are potential solutions to prevent these kinds of criminal groups from entering Canada as much as possible but, most of the time, the people who come here really are refugees. And we must welcome them.

* * *

[English]

AIR CANADA

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Our government remains focused on Canada's economic recovery and the financial security of all Canadians. As the House knows, the government received a strong mandate from Canadians to complete our recovery.

Today, I am very pleased to report to all Canadians and to the House that just minutes ago Air Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, representing the Air Canada flight attendants, have signed an agreement in principle to avoid a work stoppage and maintain full service for passengers.

[Translation]

I would like to congratulate the parties on coming to an agreement that safeguards Canada's economic recovery.

[English]

I want to applaud the efforts of the parties in focusing their attention to the matter and, of course, our federal mediation services that were instrumental in assisting the parties. Our position on Air Canada has been clear: the best agreement is always the one that the two parties can reach themselves.

I strongly encourage the parties to continue to work together so the union can secure ratification by the membership. This is an agreement that is good for both the employees and the employers and, as a result, is good for Canada and all Canadians.

The objective of the legislation that we put on notice yesterday has been achieved and we are so very pleased that air service for Canadians will be protected. We remain committed to protecting Canadians and to keeping our economy growing, strong and on track.

* * *

● (1525)

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 is described as an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prevent smuggling. However, it does nothing of the sort. What it would do is prevent refugees from arriving in Canada.

I think the best way to describe one of the flaws in the bill is to look backward, because that is what the Conservatives are doing with this bill. They are moving Canada backward. In looking backward, what would have happened had the bill been law in the past?

My ancestors arrived in this country from Ireland as refugees of a sort. They were religious refugees. They were practising Catholics who felt threatened that their religion would not be accepted with the British domination of Ireland, so they came to Canada by boat, and they paid good money for that. They came under forged documents, under the wrong name. They did this because they were desperate to leave Ireland. They knew a famine was coming, they knew there was a problem and they were desperate.

Another bunch of my ancestors came from Germany, again by boat. They left because of what they felt was religious persecution against their Catholic faith. They went to the United States first, travelling under the right documents, but they would have been detained had they come to Canada because they came by boat in large numbers and they paid somebody to bring them here.

Government Orders

My most distant relatives from my mother's family coming to Canada came to what is now the United States before the *Mayflower*. They came in 1592 or 1594, something like that. While legislation might not have been in place, there were certainly native North Americans here who, if they behaved the way the Conservatives do, would have jailed all my ancestors as they arrived by boat without documentation, without permission and they paid good money to get here.

These are but some of the ridiculous examples of what would have happened in the past. I say "ridiculous" because that is what this legislation is.

Much more recent than those occasions, in 1939 a ship containing over 900 refugees arrived in North America, looking to find some place to put those refugees. Canada turned it away. That ship went back to Europe. That ship was the *MV St. Louis*. Some members opposite have suggested that it would have been a better thing had the Conservative bill now before us been in place at that time as Canada would not have sent the ship back. Those refugees would have been put in jail instead and they would have been safe.

However, that is not what the minister said the purpose of the bill is. The minister has said that the purpose of the bill is to not allow refugees into Canada. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that the boats do not leave the country of origin. The purpose of the bill is to make it financially unprofitable for the human smugglers to bring these people across because they would know they would end up in jail.

If that is the purpose of the bill, then in 1939 the *St. Louis* would never have left Hamburg in the Conservative's view. Instead of merely 254 German citizens and Jewish people being exterminated as a result of being sent back by Canada, all 937 would have faced probable elimination in the concentration camps in Europe. I know that seems rather extreme, but I am trying to give the bill a historical perspective.

● (1530)

We cannot and should not build our laws in this country on the basis of a knee-jerk reaction to a couple of boats arriving on the west coast that someone, somewhere, declared might have criminals on them. We should not build our systems in a reactionary way, rather than looking at the overall problem.

The overall problem is that there are too many people on this planet who are refugees, who need a place to go, who need to find a home. Canada should be welcoming those people. We should not be asking those boats to stay home. We should not be trying to prevent those people from coming to Canada in the first place, which is what the minister admitted was really the purpose of the bill.

It is somewhat hypocritical of the government to suggest that it welcomes immigrants, that it welcomes immigration. It welcomed them during the last election campaign, touting a Conservative government to the immigrant community as a good thing for them. Many of those people the government was wooing are in fact refugees.

Now that we know the Conservatives' real agenda, which is to prevent refugees arriving in Canada, to prevent the necessary acceptance of people whose countries are so war-torn or so

undemocratic that they absolutely need a place to go, it is wrong. If we are trying to prevent those people coming here, it is wrong. It is so wrong.

I agree with the notion that we should attempt to stop the potential profiteering off the plight of people in very poor and war-torn situations. However, this is not the way to do it. This will not arrest a single smuggler; it will not deal with that problem at all. All it will do is to prevent people who should be allowed to come to Canada from coming to Canada. That is not what I believe.

I do not believe the Conservative government or this House believes that. I believe that we all think that Canada is a great place, a place that should be accepting of as many citizens of the world who want to come here, who can supply us with great labour and resources and their intelligence and world views. We should be accepting of that. To do otherwise, to prevent it and try to restrict it, is wrong-headed.

The specifics of the bill are so wrong that Canada will fly in the face of the convention that it signed at the UN. We signed the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. We are bound by it and yet are doing exactly what it says we should not do:

The Contracting States—

—that is us—

—shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

We should not be violating our commitments to the United Nations. Whether commitments to Libya or to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, we must not do that. We must give a strong and convincing signal to the world and Canadians that Canada is an accepting place, that Canada is a place where there are not two statuses of citizens, citizens who came by boat, as my ancestors all did, and citizens who came by plane.

Now that Air Canada is back, they will be able to come by plane in greater numbers. However, we should not be restricting refugees. The legislation is wrong-headed if its intent is to stop the flow of refugees coming to Canada.

● (1535)

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition does not have a monopoly on friends and family who came to Canada under extremely difficult circumstances. My mother also came to Canada by boat after her family had escaped Germany, dodging dogs and bullets all the way.

The opposition knows that we Conservatives do not maliciously intend to target innocent refugees. This bill is designed to protect these refugees from being duped into the most dire and dangerous of circumstances.

We ask the opposition to call a spade a spade and recognize that Conservatives are not cold-hearted people who hate refugees and want to throw them away into worse circumstances. When refugees first arrive, they are certainly held in better conditions than on the boat they arrived in. It is just a matter of finding out who is who and making sure that the good guys get in and the bad guys do not.

Could the hon. member comment on that?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we do not have a monopoly on immigration in this country. Everyone here, with the exception of a handful of native North Americans who are here, is an immigrant to this country in some way.

I would just ask the member to consider how he and his mother would have felt if, upon her arrival in Canada on that boat, she had immediately been put in prison as the result of arriving by boat, which is what this Conservative document would do. For people arriving by boat, particularly a lot of people arriving at the same time and who have paid a lot of money to come, it quite likely means prison.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill under consideration is in violation of article 31 of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees that our country has signed. It is something that good members of the global community would want to pay attention to.

Could the hon. member tell us how passing this bill will affect the status of Canada in the world community?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, clearly, when we are a signatory to a declaration at the UN, the other signatory countries expect Canada to live up to its obligations. They expect Canada to live up to what it has signed.

If we pass a law that flies in the face of that law, we will not have the same image to the rest of the world. We will lose credence. We will lose respectability and, when it comes to future declarations, we will lose the trust of those other countries.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his speech.

I would like him to comment on the fact that the Conservatives are trying to bypass the impartial and democratic processes that Canada has previously put in place. There is a refugee board and a commission to hear these kinds of applications. Those institutions are democratic and impartial. The fact that the government is trying to put all the power into the hands of the minister is a grave affront to the impartiality and the democratic nature of the institutions already in place in Canada. I would like him to comment on that.

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, how true that is. When there are laws in place that do exactly what the Conservative government says is needed, then one has to ask the question, why this? What is the purpose of this law? Is it really to do something about smugglers?

No, it is about preventing refugees from coming to Canada. That is what this law is ultimately to do, and the minister has admitted it. There are plenty of laws and regulations on the books determining what a refugee really is, and to determine whether the person has

arrived here with documentation or not and whether or not they should remain in Canada.

Those laws are already there. This legislation goes way beyond that.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the time that I have just spent in my riding of Saint-Lambert has allowed me to gauge the extent to which the legislation that we pass in this assembly and the regulations made by the governments, may, for some groups of people, have devastating consequences that we had not thought of at the outset. I have met fathers and mothers who have to live apart from their children and their spouse for ever because of one section in the regulations to the Immigration Act that creates a category of family members who cannot be sponsored. These tragic situations have allowed me to become more aware of the heavy responsibilities we have when we pass legislation. The future for hundreds, maybe thousands, of people may be irrevocably affected.

Canadians expect us to enact legislation that protects them and everyone living in Canada, whatever their status, and that does not violate their rights and freedoms. We must always keep in mind that our duty is to put in place laws that are just and fair for all. Laws that reflect, not only our most sacred values, but also the obligations that we have undertaken through the treaties we have signed.

In reaction to the illegal arrival of many foreign nationals who used the services of corrupt smugglers to abuse our immigration system, the government has introduced in Parliament new legislative measures meant to prevent other smugglers from facilitating such arrivals. The objective behind the government's initiative is definitely legitimate. Indeed, large-scale, random arrivals of individuals could dangerously compromise the safety of Canadians and could give rise to illegal human trafficking.

Unfortunately, the fact is that while the safety of Canadians remains a great priority, the government did not choose the right way to achieve that goal. Regarding our international obligations under human rights conventions signed by Canada, specifically, the Geneva convention of July 28, 1951, relating to the status of refugees, Bill C-4 is nothing short of disastrous because it completely misses the mark. Instead of targeting smugglers, the bill targets mainly asylum seekers, whether legitimate or not, as pointed out by the Canadian Bar Association.

The real challenge facing our democracy as a result of these large-scale and unpredictable arrivals "calls for...an effective response...in a way that appropriately recognizes the fundamental values of the rule of law" as stated by the Supreme Court, and the values that Canadians hold dear. The Supreme Court reminds us once again that, "In a democracy, not every response is available to meet the challenge of terrorism" or that, in relation to the bill before us today, the illegal arrival of foreign nationals does not give us the right to create discriminatory laws that destroy freedom and go against our international obligations.

Government Orders

Bill C-4 violates the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. It unduly penalizes refugees, asylum seekers and children. Our main concern has to do with the especially repressive slant the government is trying to introduce in a bill whose ultimate goal should be protection. Presented as an effective legislative measure against potential smugglers who might try to engage in human trafficking, Bill C-4 unfortunately contains very little to target smugglers directly. Most of the provisions in this bill punish not smugglers, but rather asylum seekers and refugees.

This bill disregards many of the rights that are guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and by international conventions that Canada signed, in particular, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which was signed on July 28, 1951. With regard to this Convention, the bill creates two categories of refugees: refugees who are designated by their method of arrival and other refugees. The first category of refugees will not be treated as well as the others. In this regard, the bill introduces a double standard for victims of persecution who are seeking protection in Canada.

In other words, Bill C-4 is discriminatory in that it treats victims of persecution differently. And yet, according to the spirit of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, we should not question how refugees escaped the persecution they faced in their home country. In the face of persecution, there is no good or bad way to escape.

The right to equal access to justice is a fundamental right. Unfortunately, the government is in the process of destroying this principle through Bill C-4, which it introduced to the House on the pretext of preventing smugglers from abusing our immigration system when its unspoken objective is actually to go after refugees and asylum seekers.

● (1545)

"Designated foreign nationals" cannot even appeal an unfavourable decision to the Refugee Appeal Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. The most serious criminals have full recourse but not the victims of persecution who are seeking to escape their tormentors.

If parliamentarians are asked to accept unfair laws, it will destroy the basis of our democracy.

Similarly, we cannot understand why designated foreign nationals must be deprived of the right to apply for permanent residence, why they must be automatically detained and why the government needs to add more reasons for detaining refugees.

I would like to end my speech by drawing the House's attention to the negative effects that Bill C-4 will have on the rights of the child.

In all cultures, the family is considered to be the mother cell of society. That is why one of the objectives that this Parliament assigned to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is that of facilitating family reunification.

By depriving some refugees of the right to apply for permanent residence for five years, Bill C-4 makes family reunification more difficult.

In particular it makes it harder for children to be reunited with their parents when they are designated foreign nationals; that is a clear infringement of the right to a family environment that is guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Canada is a signatory.

Finally, Bill C-4 deprives designated foreign nationals, including children, of the possibility of applying for permanent residence for five years, even after the designated foreign nationals have been granted refugee status. But an application for permanent residence is the only way in which the best interests of the child can be evaluated.

If Bill C-4 is passed, it will give the government a tool that it will use to expel children from Canada with no due consideration of their interests. That is contrary to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which our country is a signatory.

In a word, the bill targets refugees and refugee claimants instead of smugglers. It should be withdrawn because it is unfair.

The NDP is not alone in opposing it. When '88 major organizations all across Canada come out against a bill, when our legal experts in the Canadian Bar Association are opposed to a bill and lay out the grounds for their opposition, the government should pay attention rather than claim that everyone else is wrong. The objections that are ringing out all over Canada should be taken into consideration.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very eloquent speech, which was obviously fueled by a great deal of passion on this topic.

I wonder if she could say a bit more about her views on this bill's effects on family reunification and the impacts it would have on refugees who are settled in Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question.

The repercussions are enormous and truly dramatic. Husbands and wives who come here as refugees will not be able to reunite their families. That is something completely inhumane and contrary to our conventions. The repercussions really go beyond what this kind of legislation can impose.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the hon. member thinks about what the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism was saying yesterday. He said that the purpose of this bill was to influence the economic decision of prospective refugees abroad.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

In terms of the economic aspect and potential deterrence, I do not think there is an impact at all. Refugees who pay smugglers a fortune to come here are fleeing their homelands because they have very good reasons and they are fighting for their lives. They do not leave because of a mere economic need. In my view, it has to do with survival, not only economic considerations.

Government Orders

● (1550)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member explain how this bill will actually penalize the kingpins of human smuggling networks? I took a close look at every clause of this bill, and I could not find anything guaranteeing that those people would be arrested and punished.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. As I mentioned in my speech, it is the refugees, the asylum seekers, who are essentially being targeted. This bill has no impact at all on the smugglers, who are the criminals. This bill changes the status of refugees to that of criminals, but the smugglers are not going to be terribly concerned about this new bill.

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am shocked that there is an assumption that the bill would somehow affect family reunification. I came to this country by plane, not by boat, and I did not have to use smugglers to be reunited with my family. We have a great system here, a system that works and is legal. I do not know of a single case in which a person who has arrived in Canada and has been granted status has had to use smugglers to be reunited with his or her family.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his question. We are not questioning the refugee status. There are conventions and they must be applied, since they are international. In addition to the fact that a refugee is imprisoned for anywhere from one to five years, he or she is not allowed to apply for permanent residence, thus removing any possibility to submit a request for family reunification.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today after the passionate speeches of my dear colleagues on this side of the House, especially the members for Scarborough—Rouge River and La Pointe-de-l'Île. I am certain that my fellow Canadians thank them as well.

I am also a member for Scarborough, and I can say that half of my constituents were born somewhere other than Canada. If this kind of legislation had existed in the past, there would be a lot of people missing from my riding, as well as some members missing from the House, for example, the member for York South—Weston. The government is lacking a little common sense in introducing this bill.

[English]

I am saddened to see our Conservative colleagues from Scarborough also supporting this legislation that will negatively affect the families of their constituents. We would encourage them to join the rest of Scarborough in opposing this bad bill.

The bill is deeply unfair to refugees. It fails to honour the obligations under both Canadian and international law. It deprives individual cases of the independent review that justice requires. Furthermore, it will create massive costs in unnecessary detention. If it passes, this bill would prove to be unsuccessful in preventing human smuggling. We have seen time and again that more laws do little to prevent crimes like this from happening. We cannot solve a problem merely by addressing the effect and ignoring the cause. This

bill ignores the underlying problem that we face a global refugee crisis.

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the title of this bill is gravely misleading, as it would do more to punish refugees than to punish smugglers. It is wildly unfair to label the refugee crisis as a threat to the safety of Canadians. Canadians are being asked to trade the liberties of people seeking refuge in exchange for the protection of Canadian safety from a perceived threat that has no basis.

We must act within our power to stop illegal human smuggling. Yes, profiting from human trafficking of vulnerable refugees is exceptionally immoral and we want to do everything we can to deter that from happening, but let us find ways of targeting those who are committing the crime rather than the victims. Refugees do not pose a threat to Canadian public safety. This is just another example of the Conservatives' scare tactics and fearmongering.

The Conservatives are trying to sell this bill as if accepting and aiding refugees is a threat to Canadians. It's that "with us or against us", that "us or them" mentality. These tactics are hostile, irresponsible and dangerous. They have no place in the government of Canada, but we know it is how the Harper government works.

Bill C-4 requires mandatory detention of designated persons without independent review—

● (1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): As a reminder, the member may know that the use of the surname or name of other hon. members in the House is to be avoided in the course of our speeches.

The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Dan Harris: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I will say the Prime Minister's government.

Bill C-4 would require the mandatory detention of designated persons without independent review. This is arbitrary detention, which is contrary to the charter and international law. Mandatory minimum sentences and harsher penalties will not deter smugglers. As of this time, under the Immigration and Refugee Act, smuggling can already be punishable by life imprisonment. This is just another blow to our independent judiciary and its discretion.

Furthermore, refugees know little or nothing about this country other than its reputation for acceptance and generosity. They are fleeing for their lives and the lives and safety of their families. They know nothing of our laws and we want to punish them for that. Among those detained will be children. It is 2011 and we here in Canada are talking about detaining children. There is something absolutely reprehensible and wrong about that fact.

Government Orders

This bill would also provide for mandatory conditions to be imposed on release for persons indefinitely detained beyond 12 months without the possibility of release if the minister is of the opinion that their identities have not been established. Both of those additional measures would deprive persons of liberty without the opportunity for an independent tribunal to review whether they are necessary in the individual case or not, again contrary to the charter and international law.

We heard members speak earlier about Australia, which has had similar policies to lock up refugee claimants in the past at length and to deny them permanent status even when granted refugee status in an effort to stop refugees coming by boat. These policies resulted in refugees, including many children, being traumatized by their experiences in detention. The Australian Human Rights Commission, an organization created by parliament, conducted a national inquiry into children in immigration detention and found that children in Australian immigration detention centres had suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights.

Far from deterring people, depriving refugees of the right to family reunification caused a situation where people arrived by boat and then later their families, spouses and children arrived by more boats. This, in fact, created a market for more human smuggling, and this is the path that the government is taking.

The Australian public was deeply divided, with many previously unengaged citizens joining grassroots networks to protest their country's inhumane treatment of refugees. Luckily, in the past three years Australia has been moving away from the policies of detention and temporary status for refugees. However, here in Canada we apparently like to repeat others' mistakes.

Arbitrary detention is also prohibited by international law, notably by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Furthermore, this bill would deny designated persons the right to appeal a negative refugee decision to the Immigration and Refugee Board's Refugee Appeal Division. An appeal is a fundamental right and safeguard in refugee decision making, where a person's life and liberty may be at stake. By eliminating the opportunity to correct errors at this first level, the bill would put Canada at risk of violating its most fundamental obligation toward refugees, which is not to send them back to persecution.

● (1600)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear the hon. member mention the term "fearmongering". I have been listening intently all afternoon to the comments from the opposition side and I have heard nothing, frankly, but fearmongering, allegations of breaches of the Constitution, the charter of rights and international treaties. Every law, of course, is subject to interpretation. It is clear what the interpretation of the opposition is.

On this side of the House, our interpretation is that this law respects in every sense the charter of rights. It is within the democratic society that we know and the democratic society that we know is the very reason so many immigrants want to come to Canada, as our forefathers all did.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard a question but it brings a question to my mind. We have a great country that has

been very accepting of immigrants and refugees over many years. Why is the government seeking to change that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found the prior question interesting. The member made reference to the whole idea of fearmongering. I would look to my colleague from the New Democrats to provide a comment.

When the Prime Minister of Canada stands on the back of a boat called *Ocean Lady* to try to raise the profile and then label refugees as being questionable in terms of arriving in Canada, potentially implying that there are terrorists and others on board that boat, would the member who has spoken to the bill acknowledge that as being a part of fearmongering?

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I would say that makes part of the government's plan with respect to fearmongering.

With that ship and with others, it has affected several constituents in my riding as it is a riding with one of the largest Tamil populations in Canada.

Just des inquiétudes that has been created by the previous incarnation of this bill in that community has led to people being afraid as to whether their families will eventually be able to come here. It has led to a situation where some are now going to the ministry. Tamils from Sri Lanka are being told by the minister and by the minister's office that it is actually safe to go back to Sri Lanka even though we still have no international eyes on the ground. This is just part of a bigger plan to lower immigration to Canada.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the people in Scarborough Southwest, the people in Ajax—Pickering and the people in many ridings across this country would be surprised and disappointed to know that human smugglers have an advocate in the member for Scarborough Southwest.

There is no question that immigrants to this country, including recent immigrants, want our immigration policy to be based on rules. They want us to legislate for a modern age. We take exception to the member's claim that these issues cannot be resolved, that the situation cannot be improved by legislation. It can.

I would like the member to simply acknowledge a single fact. Will he acknowledge that, under this Prime Minister's government, immigration levels to Canada and the arrival of refugees in Canada have achieved historic highs?

● (1605)

Mr. Dan Harris: What I definitely do not appreciate, Mr. Speaker, is being accused of being a booster for human smuggling.

Government Orders

What I would like to throw back at the government concerns why people in my riding are waiting two and three years right now to be reunified with loved ones when they did arrive legally. Why are they not receiving the immigration and settlement services that they deserve? Why are organizations like the South Asian Women's Rights Organization running immigration settlement services out of an apartment because it cannot get funding from the government?

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the bill today and to participate in this very important and serious debate.

I am new to this chamber, like many of my colleagues, but I am not new to the notion of justice and fairness. I do not see much of that in the bill. The bill is yet another clear indication that the government does not make public policy based on facts and evidence but instead on ideology, an ideology that is regressive in the case of the bill, public policy that is punitive and unnecessarily so.

I read the bill line by line, section by section. It comprises 37 sections, 23 of which are directed at persons seeking asylum and the limitation of their rights. How can it fairly be said that this is about human smugglers? The bill is not so much about seeking to punish human smugglers, but rather it is about denying rights to refugee claimants and treating them, not as criminals, but as worse than criminals, which I will expand upon later in my remarks.

How did we arrive at the point where the government is putting through such an ill-considered law? In August 2010, as we have heard, a cargo ship landed on our shores with close to 500 Tamils. It was a shocking situation to many of us. Were they safe? Were they hungry? Did they suffer ill effects from the journey and the conditions in which they were travelling? These people were seeking a better life. I believe they thought Canada was a place of peace, a place of hope, a place where they could make a better life and a place where they could escape whatever injustice and persecution they had encountered earlier in their life. They had the hope that Canada would be a place of refuge.

I agree with those who say that we should be very vigilant about our security. None of us want a system where people who pose a threat are seeking an opportunity to do harm to Canada. I think we all agree on that. With respect to refugee claimants, we all know that there are some who come here who are not legitimate. However, the government seems incapable of acknowledging that there is a rigorous process, that those who do not meet the standards that are required under the law are sent back.

I would also suggest that, like any law, we need to periodically review and assess current legislation to see if it still works and to make improvements where necessary. That is our job as parliamentarians.

However, one would think, by listening to the Conservatives, that the country is being overrun by illegals. In the case of the Tamil refugees two summers ago, it seems that the Conservatives could hardly wait to gain some political advantage from the situation. It was a human tragedy made into political theatre, a race to the bottom.

I reject the idea that because we hold a different opinion on the bill it automatically means that we are soft on crime or we somehow do not care about public security. That is nonsense. As was so aptly stated in this chamber on an earlier occasion, when the only implement we have in our toolbox is a sledgehammer, everything starts to look like a rock.

There was no nuance, no compromise, no dialogue, no amendments, no costing and no acknowledgement that the issue was complex, nothing. Solutions are easy and simple. For the Conservatives it is all or nothing, the world is in black and white. That is not the reality. That is not the world in which we live.

●(1610)

The vast majority of refugee claims are legitimate. Men, women and children come here hoping for a life that is better than the one they had, so much so that they are prepared to risk all, and yes, even to pay smugglers for the opportunity for a better life. Why? For many people around the world, Canada is a place of hope and peace, but that will change under the Conservative government.

Smugglers should be confronted with the full force of the law, and we on this side are prepared to support legislation that does that. Again, the first nine and one-half pages of this bill only speak to denial of the rights of refugees. It only speaks to denial of the rights of victims. This bill is not so much about smugglers; at its core it is about punishing individuals who seek refugee status.

International law is clear: it is not a crime to seek asylum. It seems the Conservatives wish to send the message that even if an individual has a legitimate claim, he or she cannot expect to be treated with the human dignity that should be afforded to all people but instead are treated as a criminal first, in fact worse than a criminal.

In this country suspected criminals have a right to appeal. Suspected criminals have a right to be protected from arbitrary detention. Suspected criminals are assessed on the basis of reasonable and probable grounds based on belief. The lower threshold that is being applied to asylum seekers in this bill is reasonable and probable grounds based on suspicion. The refugees are treated as less than suspected criminals.

It also gives rise as to whether this bill is constitutional, which is what I will focus on. I do not believe, nor does anyone on this side believe, that this bill will withstand a charter challenge. Certainly the Canadian Bar Association does not believe it. Certainly the former chair of the Immigration and Refugee Board does not believe it. I believe that the Supreme Court of Canada, as soon as it gets the chance, will strike this bill down.

This bill calls for mandatory detention for a year. In 2007 the Supreme Court of Canada struck down a law that called for mandatory detention of 120 days under a security certificate. This is three times worse than a law that has already been found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada and yet the Conservatives plow on.

Government Orders

Canadians should know that the Conservative government has already decided that amendments will not be considered. Let us think about that. Let us consider the obvious problems this punitive measure has when judged against the charter. Does this proposal from the Conservatives in any way sound like the Canada we know? Is there not anyone over there on the Conservative benches who can see the clear violation of sections 9 and 10 of the charter?

Let me close by saying that I have no doubt the government will get its way and that this bill will be rammed through the House. That does not make it right. That is regrettable.

We who believe in the charter, we who believe that people should be treated fairly cannot support this legislation. It fails the test of the charter. It fails the test of fairness. It fails the test of justice. It fails Canadians. We will not support this bill.

• (1615)

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that the world is not black and white.

Most refugees are innocent, but not all. Would the member agree that we need to know who is who before we let them out on the streets? We all want to give relief to those who endure the atrocious situations that smuggled humans endure, but is it not more compassionate to create legislation that would prevent them from getting into those atrocious situations in the first place?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my friend that that is a laudable objective, but the legislation misses the mark.

The legislation, instead of offering a hand of compassion to refugees, says to them, "Welcome to Canada. Now we are going lock you up. We may or may not be back in 12 months."

That is what this legislation does. It is unconstitutional. It shows a level of compassion that Canadians are not comfortable with. There is no way the legislation can be supported. It targets the victims.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing is being overlooked in some respects, although it has been raised in the dialogue, and it is an important issue. More Canadians are going to ask who will pay for this. Where are the economic resources going to come from to lock people up and warehouse them potentially for a year? We saw the situation with the Tamil refugees and it was hundreds of people. That cost is borne by the taxpayer.

Instead of putting our heads in the sand what we should be doing is processing people expeditiously to find out whether or not they can be immigrants to this country. The sooner we do that the sooner they will be contributing to the Canadian economy, paying into the pension system, the tax system, and being successful members of society.

I ask the member to think about those economic consequences.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, it struck me in the course of preparing my remarks that when people come through the door of my constituency office in Charlottetown, they want to talk about jobs. They want to talk about the fact that the economic situation on Prince Edward Island and in Canada is such that they cannot find work. They want to talk about the fact that the EI claims processing centre in Prince Edward Island is closing and we will be the only one without one. They want to talk about economic issues, and yet we

have a government that is focused on expending our scarce resources on minimum mandatory sentencing and on locking up people who seek asylum. It is misguided.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member has read the bill very carefully. We have been assuming in much of this that the bill is only directed to people arriving by ship. That seems to be an assumption. However, it has also been the case that we have heard the minister of immigration suggest that, if he so chooses, he will be able to designate other refugees arriving by other means as an irregular arrival of a group. We do not know what a group is. We do not know if it is a family, a couple, or 10 people. It is very uncertain. However, it does appear to be the case that other modes of arrival can be treated as irregular, at the discretion of the minister.

I wonder if the hon. member has any comments on that aspect of the uncertainty created by the bill.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's reading of the bill is the same as mine. There are provisions within the bill which allow for the arrest of a ship, but irregular entrants to Canada are not defined solely on their mode of arrival. They are defined on the basis of the number. Two people or more could be found to be irregular entrants by any means.

That is another problem with the bill. As I have said, if all one has in one's toolbox is a sledgehammer, everything looks like a rock. It is over-reaching.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP) Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is very proud of the gains it made in the May election. It says that it received a clear mandate from Canadians to fight crimes like trafficking in refugees. In fact, I feel that they sent Canadians a message of deceit. In Quebec, they decided to mount a campaign of fear in order to convince voters that refugees are a threat to our country's security. I was very sad when I saw a number of advertisements that tried to make Canadians afraid of refugees.

Today, I am trying to make it clear who these refugees are. This government is too wrapped up in its success to understand the refugees' real story. They are women, children, the elderly, victims of civil war, rape and natural disasters. These refugees are not criminals and it is a disgrace that this government is making them out to be criminals.

The real criminals did not appear in the Conservatives' advertisements and they are not among those who will be detained under this bill. This government is deceiving Canadians in order to get an unfair bill passed. Bill C-4 will create problems, it will not put a stop to the problem of smuggling. The greatest problem with this bill is that it was introduced to solve the problem of smuggling, but it will really do little to solve it.

Instead, this bill attacks the victims. It will allow the authorities to detain refugees for up to a year. That means that all refugees who arrive in Canada by irregular means, be they children, women, victims of rape or civil war, will automatically be detained. It should also be added that the definition of the term “irregular arrival” is too vague.

I repeat: this government wants to detain children who have probably already undergone horrific experiences to an extent I cannot even imagine. Does this government understand the effect that a year in a detention centre could have on a child? Is the government ready to take responsibility for that? It appears so.

Based on the speeches I heard yesterday, the government is claiming it wants to protect refugees from things like leaky boats and immigration fees that are too high. If it really wanted to protect refugees, it would never pass a bill that would put children in prison and discourage refugees from escaping to a safe country like ours.

So I find it ironic that the government is ready to invest resources and money to help people in war-torn countries, yet it is not ready to accept and help refugees from those very same countries. I have already pointed out some of the problems with the bill, but there are also others.

This bill is going to divide refugees into two categories: “normal” refugees and refugees with an “irregular arrival”. This division contravenes section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, since the two refugee categories are not going to be equal before and under the law. We have a government that introduces unconstitutional bills, without due consideration. What a disgrace.

Another measure that not only attacks smuggling victims, but also all refugees, provides that all refugees have to wait five years before they can apply for permanent residence. Instead of penalizing the smugglers, this government is going to take away the rights of refugees to bring their families here or even to have their families visit. Picture a two-year-old who will not be seeing his or her parents for five years. It seems that that is what the government would like to see with this bill.

The Minister of Immigration explained yesterday that the government is trying to address the smuggling issue with this bill. He said that it is wrong that victims of conflict in unsafe countries have to pay thousands of dollars to escape.

• (1625)

If this government truly wanted to correct the situation, it would consider other options such as improving the bill previously passed in the House or focusing its efforts on attacking those who are creating the problem, namely the smugglers themselves and not the victims. But this bill could potentially increase the number of illegal refugees, since refugees will no longer have the right to bring their family here in a legal manner. It should be noted that this is what happened in Australia.

I have underscored the many negative aspects of this bill, as my colleagues have over the past couple of days. It is time for the government to stop playing political games with this bill and start considering alternatives that will provide real solutions to the problem of smugglers without penalizing the victims.

Government Orders

We are lucky to live in a democratic country where we do not live in fear. What sort of example will we be setting for the international community if our country welcomes refugees by taking away their fundamental rights and freedoms? Our welcome should not cost them a year in a detention centre.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague finished with an interesting point with regard to the detainment for a year. I would like to get her perspective on something I have been thinking about during this process. In the detainments we have seen with Sri Lanka, we will have the families that are detained.

Those detained families are going to have experiences that are not going to be very positive. If they are going to be pushed back into Canadian society or later become immigrants, or if they are sent back abroad, what are the government's responsibilities going to be? Then there are the costs of meeting those responsibilities, as people are potentially going to be locked up for a year. We are not talking about a couple of nights here and there.

We are talking about legislation that identifies that the government would have the right to keep large numbers of people in place for a full year. There is going to be a processing time for that, but obviously the government has decided it is more important to have large numbers of people locked up than it is to try to process refugees more quickly so that they could either move on to their Canadian citizenship application or, alternatively, be sent back home.

I would ask for my colleague's comments on that aspect.

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

It is true that staying in a detention centre for a year can have a very negative impact. Detainment can cause psychological problems. I hope the government will be prepared to take responsibility for that. When these people get permanent resident status, they will come back into our society. We want them to be happy with our society, to prosper and to contribute to the economy. Staying in a detention centre for a year is going to hurt the refugees' ability to integrate into our society when they obtain permanent resident status.

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, victims of conflicts or natural disasters are helped by international relief organizations such as the United Nations. Canada is fulfilling its obligations as a member of the international community and accepts a high number of refugees every year.

Does the hon. member suggest that our country should have no limits on the number of refugees coming here every year?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. That being said, that is not the point. It is not a question of numbers. We live in a democratic country. If people are prepared to flee by ship—and perhaps not the safest one in the world—to come to Canada, then they should be given a chance. They should not be held in a detention centre. That is the crux of the debate here.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to our colleague's speech. On this side of the House, we can see that the Conservatives keep playing the division game. With this bill, we see that the minister has all of the authority, all of the control to determine who is telling the truth and who is not.

Is the member worried about the minister's expanded powers, given that this government has played so many political games in this area?

● (1630)

Ms. Charmaine Borg: Mr. Speaker, I would once again like to thank my colleague for his question.

I find this arbitrary government power troubling, especially because we have issues in Canada, although they are not across the board. Where is the oversight process? A mechanism has not really been implemented to watch the government and oversee what it is doing. That is very troubling, and I appreciate the question.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate on the question, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, National Defence; the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, Citizenship and Immigration; and the hon. member for Halifax, the Oil and Gas Industry.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our party, as many of my colleagues have eloquently said, does not believe that Bill C-4, as it stands right now, would come close to dealing with the issue of human trafficking.

We have many refugees living in my riding of Davenport. We have advocates on their behalf. I have met with these people, with these refugees' advocates, and they tell me we are dealing with very vulnerable people who are themselves victims of crime.

I have also sat down with members of the business community. These are self-employed small business people, such as roofers and people in the building trades. They follow the letter of the law, and yet they are competing with unscrupulous criminals who are running other kinds of construction and roofing companies and employing groups of individuals who may or may not be themselves victims of human trafficking, although we cannot determine that, and their ability to compete on a level playing field is thus severely compromised.

They come to my office and speak both of frustration about their own business and about a severe and intense concern for these

groups of people they see working in very unregulated work environments with no oversight, with no rights, with no recourse, but with fear for themselves and fear for their families. There is nothing in this bill that would address these very serious issues in communities right across the country.

In fact, the incidence of prosecution for human trafficking is very low. In Ontario, up to 2010 there have only been a handful of prosecutions. In fact, in Toronto itself there have been no prosecutions. There are reasons for that, but those reasons are not addressed in this bill.

Many of our good people in law enforcement and in prosecution see evidence of human trafficking, but it blurs with other kinds of crimes that they are unfortunately much more used to seeing and much more able to prosecute, such as living off the avails of prostitution.

We are saying that the bill does not address the issues of the actual criminals in this situation, but would in fact punish the victims. This seems bizarre to us.

The bill came up in the last Parliament and was roundly rejected by the majority of parliamentarians and the majority of Canadians. The majority of Canadians did not vote for the current government, and the majority of Canadians still reject the bill as it stands today.

I want to remind the House that there was a time many years ago, in an economic downturn, when we accepted a staggering number of refugees. In fact, the largest single group of refugees in our history was accepted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1979 to 1980 we welcomed, as we should, 50,000 to 60,000 Vietnamese refugees, whom we then called “boat people”.

My eldest son's best friend in grade school was the son of a Vietnamese boat person who, when he finally got off that boat, arrived in Canada with absolutely nothing. Today he has a successful small business, owns a home, has a full-time job and has children who no doubt are going to contribute in staggeringly positive ways to our country.

● (1635)

This is the great Canadian legacy of which we should be proud. This is what Canadians expect from their federal government and the kind of leadership that Canadians expect Canada to display to the world. Instead, we see a draconian measure that does not give law enforcement agencies the tools they need to adequately prosecute human traffickers, the criminals in this case.

My riding has refugees and children of refugees. I have no doubt that those families, if given the right kind of attention and support, will become exemplary members of the Canadian family. There is nothing at all in the bill that addresses this issue.

On the issue of the Vietnamese boat people, studies were done which tracked our friends in the Vietnamese community who came in 1979. They found that within 10 years the unemployment rate among the Vietnamese boat people was 2.3% lower than the average unemployment rate at the time for Canada. One in five had started businesses and 99% of them had successfully applied to become Canadian citizens and, by and large, a much lower than average number had to avail themselves of Canada's social safety net. This is the kind of success that compassion brings. This is the kind of success on which Canada has been built. This is the kind of success that we on this side of the aisle believe we should proudly trumpet to the world.

As I said, Canada has a very low rate of conviction for human smuggling. This low conviction rate is due to many factors. The police and RCMP need the tools to deal with this issue effectively. We do not see this in the bill. The bill does not deal with the issue. These are immigration issues, but the government seems to think they are public safety issues. The Conservatives are playing politics with refugees.

We can talk about refugees in sort of a general way, but my riding has refugees who want to contribute to Canadian society. They are here because where they were was a place that they could no longer be, a place they had to flee. Canada has always been a country that welcomed and provided support to those in our world who were terrorized, brutalized and abandoned. That is the kind of Canada the party on this side of the aisle believes in and that is why we in the NDP are very opposed to the bill.

● (1640)

Mr. Kyle Seebach (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the members opposite today, we are talking about irregular migrants. We are not talking about the refugee system. Canada has the most generous refugee system in the world. Nearly one in ten of global refugees resettle in Canada. Nothing is going to change that with this legislation. We are dealing with irregular migrants and we are putting a system in place to try to deal with that issue.

Members opposite are trying to tarnish Canada's reputation internationally by saying we have become cold-hearted. They are playing the politics of fear and smear and I really wish they would stop.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member opposite and struggled to find a question, but I will answer a question that I think he might have asked.

Concern for Canada's international reputation has already been sullied by the reputation of the government. Canada has always stood for a compassionate ethos with regard to refugees. I am sorry, but we in the NDP do not see that reflected in the bill.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to ask a question because I have been following this debate as well.

In my hand I have a list of organizations that are opposed to Bill C-4. Some 80 civil society organizations dealing with immigration and refugee issues across the country, legal groups, church groups and a wide variety of people have all come out opposed to the legislation.

Government Orders

Is the member familiar with any list that the Conservatives might have that would show some support from civil society, from the people who work in this field, on this legislation, so we could have a balance where we could see that the Conservative government is reaching out to society to try to determine what society thinks of its legislation?

Here is the list of the organizations that do not support it. Has the member heard of another list that shows civil society support?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, we cannot find civil society groups that back this legislation. In fact, in Toronto there are advocates and advocacy groups for those who are refugees and victims of human trafficking. None of them have been consulted in the crafting of this legislation. I would ask the government this. How come?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell members opposite who supports the bill. It is average ordinary Canadians who have asked us to take action against human smuggling. The bill is about that. It is not about the overall refugee program, which, under the minister and this government, has accepted more refugees than in the history of our country.

I have listened for a couple of days and there does not seem to be a focus on human smuggling. There is talk about children and families. These people are being thrown into the holds of rusty boats by profiteers. We want to discourage them from using those services and crack down on human smugglers. Why will the opposition not join us?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, the reason we will not join the member is because the bill does not actually crack down on human smuggling. The legislation does nothing to dissuade human traffickers from plying their trade.

Also, the refugee of today is the average Canadian of tomorrow and that is who we should be thinking about here. The legislation does not support those people.

● (1645)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today to voice my outright opposition to Bill C-4, as introduced by the Conservative Party.

I echo my colleagues who, during debate yesterday, so rigorously exposed the major gaps and grey areas in this bill.

Without restating all of the points that were brought up yesterday, I want to say that it is clear that in the eyes of the House and the eyes of Canadians, Bill C-4 directly violates a number of international agreements that Canada has so proudly ratified, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In addition, it contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Government Orders

Let us remember that Canada committed to the rights of child refugees and migrants in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada's third and fourth reports highlighted the main measures passed from January 1998 to December 2007 to encourage implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the involvement of children in armed conflict.

With regard to this report, the Government of Canada should also remember that it is accountable to many Canadian NGOs and to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who were asked to comment on the issues to be dealt with in the report.

Canada will have to justify any act that is illegal or violates ratified international agreements.

With regard to the protection of minor refugees, separated minors and unaccompanied minors requesting asylum, we should remember that, in August 2006, the *Overseas Processing Manual* used by Canadian immigration officers for resettling refugees was updated to include a new policy on guardianship.

The Guardianship Protocol established procedures for processing children who are dependents of the principal applicant and minors who are blood relatives, that is, separated minors with a blood relative in Canada who is not their father or mother.

This protocol recognizes that children are particularly vulnerable and encourages de facto guardians or blood relations to obtain legal guardianship. It ensures that the appropriate authorities closely monitor the well-being of these children.

This protocol also ensures that refugee children resettled in Canada receive the care and protection necessary to their well-being.

All recommendations for minor blood relatives made by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees must reflect the child's best interests, and all the decisions made under the protocol must take into account the child's best interests.

In addition, the protocol provides a child with the opportunity to comment on the decision made in his or her regard. In April 2008, the Government of Canada updated its manual for protected persons, *Processing Claims for Refugee Protection*, to include guidelines taking into account the age and sex of the child.

The objective of these guidelines is to support the priority processing of the claims of vulnerable people, including children. These new guidelines respond to recommendations made by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that Canada should give priority to vulnerable people.

We avoid placing children in detention as much as possible, whether or not they are accompanied. We always try to find another solution that is in the child's best interests.

I would also like to reiterate the response of the Government of Canada to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights:

Both the Canada Border Services Agency and Citizenship and Immigration Canada have programs and policies in place to assist and protect vulnerable migrant children within their respective mandates....

Within this context, reuniting families as quickly as possible is a priority for the Government of Canada and a key part of the mandate of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. In overseas family reunification, Citizenship and Immigration Canada works

to fulfill its commitment to process most of these cases within 6 months. In the case of overseas refugee children, concurrent processing of refugee family members who are residing in different locations is facilitated. In the case of resettlement of eligible separated minors from overseas, a Guardianship Protocol adopted in 2006 provides visa and settlement officers with instructions on how to facilitate the resettlement of [these] children...

• (1650)

When unaccompanied, separated or otherwise possibly vulnerable children arrive at a port of entry, or if they are encountered anywhere within Canada, border service officials are trained to pay extra attention to all children and to refer a child to the appropriate provincial or territorial child protection agency, when there is a concern that the child may be at risk. Border officials are instructed and trained to be aware of factors such as age, gender, cultural background, and the child's general circumstances [whether or not they are a refugee]...A child may only be detained as a measure of last resort, and a school-aged child in detention must be provided with educational and recreational opportunities as well as counselling after having been detained for seven days....

Returning an unaccompanied child to his or her country of origin, or nationality, however, is a complex process and is based on the requirements of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Canada Border Services Agency works closely with [these] agencies...

I would also like to remind members of the commitment as part of the way forward that the Government of Canada made to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights.

The government appreciates the care and concern that the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights has shown for children in its report. It has provided guidance on the way forward, and has encouraged a continued commitment to collaborative efforts to meet Canada's obligations under the convention.

The very process of answering the committee's report required extensive discussions and collaboration throughout the federal government, ensuring that policies and programs were again considered through the lens of the best interests of the child principle and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child... The government acknowledges that meeting the needs of children is an on-going process, requiring commitment and diligence.

The government will not waver from its goal of making Canada a better place for children and their families. So, with Bill C-4, can we be assured that children will be the greatest beneficiaries? Can we be assured that the government is still working towards the goal of making Canada a better place for children and their families? Can we be assured that Canadian laws and international conventions ratified in solidarity are being respected?

By trying to pass bills that violate human rights, the government is making a laughing stock of Canada. Many countries and international organizations are watching us and will be aware of the decisions made here. We must be careful not to fuel old prejudices that involve projecting onto foreigners all the evils and all the problems that might exist in a country, all in the name of gaining popularity among certain groups of voters.

Canada will need international allies to support its economy and ensure its growth. These are the same allies who scrutinize what we say and do, and how we treat our communities. To illustrate my remarks, here are a few excerpts from some Amnesty International recommendations. It is worth noting that Bill C-4 is a reincarnation of Bill C-49, which was introduced here and rejected by this House.

There have been serious human rights concerns with respect to the government's response to the arrival of two boatloads of Sri Lankan migrants off the coast of British Columbia—the Ocean Lady in October 2009 and the Sun Sea in August 2010. Government ministers made inflammatory remarks about those on board, before the boats had even arrived in Canada—particularly with respect to the Sun Sea. They were described as illegal migrants, queue jumpers, human traffickers and security threats; and were accused of links to terrorism. Rarely was there any acknowledgement they might be refugee claimants. Notably all 76 individuals who arrived on the Ocean Lady were found to be eligible to make refugee claims and have done so.

...Federal political parties need to commit to: not reintroducing Bill C-49 after the election [this is what Amnesty International was calling for]; ensuring that any efforts to tackle human smuggling or human trafficking conform to Canada's obligations under international human rights and refugee law.

● (1655)

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during her presentation the member talked a lot about vulnerable persons. As we know, thousands of people die each year using human smuggling services, so anyone using human smuggling services is basically a vulnerable person.

This legislation would not only increase punishment for human smuggling, it would discourage those who would use human smugglers to get to Canada. In essence, this legislation would protect vulnerable people by discouraging them from coming to Canada in an unsafe manner. Why will the NDP not support that?

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. There are laws in Canada, including one that punishes smugglers with life imprisonment, in fact. So, Bill C-4 is a fake bill. We are talking about refugees and protecting children on this side of the House because this bill masks the fact that legislation already exists to punish smugglers. So it is not necessary to create another law. Steps need to be taken to imprison the smugglers.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for giving us such a good example of detailed research. Could she give us the names of some of the organizations that took part in the third and fourth reports of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that worked with the government?

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. UNICEF Canada, with which we are all familiar, is one of the organizations that took part in these reports, along with the Adoption Council of Canada, the National Alliance for Children and Youth, the Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work and a number of others.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciated my colleague's comments. Earlier, we saw how the Conservatives understand this bill. A Conservative member said that it will discourage people who are in situations of human rights violations and situations of war. This bill will discourage these people who are trying to save their lives and the lives of their children and family. They will not come; they will not escape a situation where they risk being killed, because the Conservatives have introduced this bill.

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Is this debate not absurd, just like the comments from the Conservative members who do not even seem to understand the scope of this bill that they have introduced in the House?

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster. It really seems that the people who introduced the bill do not understand it. Detention centres are currently being built. In Canada, there are three centres where refugees who are waiting are already incarcerated. The children and mothers are separated from the fathers. That is already happening. There is a social cost. How much will it all add up to? How many centres like that are going to be built?

In the past, immigrants used to come to Grosse Île, near Quebec City. Putting all immigrants and refugees into camps while waiting to be able to integrate them into society because they do not have identification papers and passports is a completely outdated way of doing things. It was a complete failure during Canada's waves of immigration. That is what happened on Grosse Île and near New York City, in the United States. Putting people into such camps is not a good way of doing things.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of being the official opposition critic for immigration and citizenship when this bill was introduced for the first time as Bill C-49. It was a very bad bill at the time, and I am very disappointed to see that the government is putting it forward again in the same form, now called Bill C-4. We are still discussing a bill that does not work.

● (1700)

[English]

It is a little like *Groundhog Day* where we are going over this again. However, I will try to keep things extremely simple for the members of the government so that they understand why this is a very poor piece of legislation.

An hon. member: Yes you should.

An hon. member: You should be very understanding.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: First, this bill is illegal. Second, this bill is ineffective. Third, this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I am sure that members will be interested to hear what the member for Papineau has to say.

The hon. member for Papineau.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, this bill is illegal, is ineffective and fundamentally is ideologically driven.

Why is this bill illegal? Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms we have the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned. In a Supreme Court judgment that came down a few years ago, 120 days was put as the outside limit beyond which someone could not be imprisoned without recourse to justice. This bill proposes one year as a mandatory detention. Whether or not the Conservatives like it, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to everyone on Canadian territory, not just Canadian citizens.

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This bill is also in violation of our United Nations obligations as a signatory to the UN convention on refugees, which demands that countries that are signatories to the convention on refugees expedite the integration of refugees into citizenship and life within those countries as much as possible.

To stipulate an arbitrary limit of five years before someone can seek permanent residency is in direct violation of both the spirit and letter of our responsibilities under the UN convention.

This bill will not pass legal muster. If it does not pass that, the question then becomes, what does it try to do? The Conservatives have made a lot of hay about how this would be a deterrent. It will prevent vulnerable people from taking the risks that we all recognize are associated with travelling across the oceans on leaky ships.

The problem with that thought process is that the deterrents we are proposing, a potential year of imprisonment or five years without permanent residency, are enough of a disincentive to deter legitimate refugees from coming over.

I remind the House that to be considered a legitimate refugee, the person must be fleeing from a state or country that offers no protection from persecution, torture and death. The refugee and his or her family must be in danger of their very lives and existence with no community or infrastructure to protect them from death or torture.

Refugees are willing to risk spending a little more time in prison in Canada where they will not be persecuted, killed or tortured. As well, although it is against Canadian law and principles, the possibility that they may not be able to bring their families over for five years is not a particularly powerful disincentive.

The bill does not work. It will not prevent people who are legitimate refugees from taking risks to come to Canada.

On the other side of the equation, imposing mandatory minimums of 10 years and harsher penalties on the smugglers who already face life imprisonment and millions of dollars in fines will not make a big difference to what is a multi-billion dollar industry.

If the bill is illegal and ineffective, the issue then becomes why is it in place and why is it being brought forward?

The minister likes to speak of Tamil refugee claimants living in the south of India who have heard they can get a monthly income in Canada and think it is wonderful.

The fact is this bill does not apply to economic migrants. If refugees come here trying to improve their lot in life they are not considered to be refugees. There is an evaluation process and they will be returned home. They do not get to jump any immigration queue by using the refugee process.

Perhaps it will deter economic migrants from boarding leaky ships to cross the ocean. That is fine, but we already have a process. A couple of years ago all parties agreed to pass Bill C-11 to improve the way we process refugees and expedite the return of failed refugee claimants. That is a much more effective deterrent.

• (1705)

What this bill does is punish people who, because they are recognized as actual refugees, are by definition among the most vulnerable people on the planet.

So why do we have a bill that is both illegal and ineffective? It is about ideology. It is about torquing up anti-immigration sentiment. It is about making people feel, every time the term "queue jumpers" is used, that the reason a family of new Canadians cannot sponsor a husband or wife or parents to come over in less than 10 or 12 years these days is that there are ships of queue jumpers showing up. That is a clever and insidious piece of misinformation the government is putting out.

There is no queue for refugees. We have a refugee process. Everyone who arrives here, whether by ship, bicycle, plane or somehow by sneaking across the border, gets evaluated within a process. The idea that the process of evaluation of 500 migrants who have arrived in two ships over the past few years is somehow bogging down our entire system overlooks the fact that we accepted 280,000 immigrants through our immigration process last year. Every year we accept about 250,000 to 260,000 immigrants on average. Every year we accept somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 refugees. There is an order of magnitude of difference between those two numbers. So to say we are bogging down our system with these boats coming here and getting in our way and costing us lots of money is disingenuous to say the least, but dangerous to the sense of what Canada is and what it is around the world.

We are a country that has made mistakes in the past, in turning around ships like the *St. Louis* and the *Komagata Maru*. We are a country that has made mistakes by bowing to popular opinion and interring Japanese Canadian citizens and Italians and others in World War II.

We are supposed to have learned from our processes and errors. We are supposed to be able to say that we will not do this again, that we will not make these mistakes. Yet this piece of legislation falls into demagogic pandering to people's fears of refugees and others, and is actually a denial of the kind of Canada that we have fought to build over decades and generations.

[Translation]

Canada is a country governed by law and justice, seeking to be a safe haven of possibilities for everyone around the globe. As soon as we start closing our doors and turning our backs on the world's most vulnerable people, this is no longer the Canada we all believe in.

[English]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the member please enlighten us? Why is it that he believes that human smugglers are somehow integral to or a legitimate part of our refugee process?

His speech failed to mention his idea of effective for tackling this problem, which did not exist at the time of the arrival of boat people from Vietnam in the late 1970s. This problem did not exist at the time of the mistakes made by Liberal governments during World War II with regard to Jewish refugees. It exists today.

Why is it that the member and his party have voted for measures to deter terrorists and to crack down on drug smugglers and other branches of international organized crime but not on human smugglers, who are not a legitimate part of the refugee process for this country and whose involvement in this process this bill would deter and, eventually, if successfully implemented, would end? Could he please answer that question?

• (1710)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the parliamentary secretary to look through the bill again to see that there is very little in it to address human smugglers. We would love to be able to crack down on human smugglers; we would love it if this bill were able to go after human smugglers.

If the parliamentary secretary wants to know how, I will give him three ways to do that.

First, we should work with transit countries like Thailand to crack down on and arrest the gangs responsible for human smuggling. The fact is that when the minister announced at one point that 100 arrests had been made in Thailand, those were not arrests of human smugglers but of asylum seekers. So the government's emphasis is again on refugees.

We should also work with transit countries to accept refugees.

Moreover, we should work with originating countries to ensure that their situations improve.

That is not what this bill is doing.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the hon. member for Papineau on his speech

I wonder if he could expand on the notion that this bill is based on ideology, and what effect this kind of ideology can have on our society.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

This is part of the Conservative tough on crime ideology, as even Mr. Duceppe used to call it.

The Conservatives are trying to find ways to convince people that they are really tough on crime, as we saw today with their omnibus crime bill that imposes obviously harsh measures, even though it will have no positive effect on a country in which the crime rate is already going down. It is their ideology that makes them say they are being tough on traffickers, yet they introduce a bill that does not target traffickers and instead targets refugees.

That is the triumph of ideology and image over substance.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from Papineau on Bill C-4, the fact that punishing vulnerable refugees will be ineffective, illegal and inhumane. He mentioned that it would be five years before a refugee could apply for permanent residency status. Another factor in the bill is that a decision could be made not to allow that

permanent residency because of factors that may have changed in the country of origin.

I would like my colleague to comment on what it would do to the fabric of Canada and the economy of Canada to have refugees remaining in limbo for years after having been determined to be genuine refugees but not able to know whether they can even have a successful permanent resident application.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: This country was built on people seeking better lives for themselves and their families, trying to build their futures. Our ancestors, if they are not first nations, came from all around the world trying to build a better life here in this country. To tell someone once that he or she has been accepted as a refugee, or come from a failed state no longer able to protect them from persecution or death and that they can stay in Canada and start building a life, but that we may send him or her back in a few years if things get better, that uncertainty is not the way we build a strong country. It is yet another failing of the bill.

• (1715)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first chance to rise in this new session, I want to welcome you and all of my colleagues back to this place. It is good to see everyone and I look forward to our passionate discussions in debates to come.

Today I rise to debate Bill C-4 or, as the Conservative government has dubbed it, the Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act.

When I started to read the bill, I must admit that I had an odd feeling of déjà vu. The name of the bill reminded me of a movie title that really has nothing to do with the movie itself; it seems out of place and even misleading. With its name, one might think that the bill would be straightforward and do what its name says, that is, prevent human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system. Sadly, the bill will not do that.

As written, the bill misses the mark. It takes square aim at the victims of human smuggling, the vulnerable and the poor, those who are desperate to seek a better life and to escape the horrors of oppression, poverty, discrimination and mortal danger. We in the NDP do not believe that the solution to this, or any other problem for that matter, is to punish the victim.

The bill as worded would create two separate categories of refugee claimants. As such, it is discriminatory and a violation of charter equality rights and the refugee convention, which it clearly does. However, these facts do not seem to bother the government so far.

Let me point to more issues that I have with the bill as it stands.

Under this proposed legislation, we see that designated claimants could not apply for permanent residency for five years. Furthermore, if the person fails to comply with the conditions or reporting requirements, this five year suspension can be extended to six years.

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This proposed rule applies both to those accepted as refugees and those who have been refused or who never make a claim. For accepted refugees, the worst consequence is that this rule would delay reunification with spouses and children overseas for five years. These families have already suffered a great deal, but with this proposal the government seems bent on adding to their suffering.

We in the New Democratic Party have known for a long time that the Conservative government has not been very concerned about family reunification, but this adds to the lack of empathy on the government's part.

[Translation]

The Conservatives state that this bill will result in a reduction in human trafficking. But in reality, in its present form, the bill concentrates too much power in the hands of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and unfairly penalizes the refugees. By contrast, the NDP wants to directly penalize the criminals: the traffickers and the smugglers. As it presently stands, the bill punishes legitimate refugees and those trying to help them. The proposed process is not clear, and it may be arbitrary and even discriminatory in the extreme.

[English]

Parliament just approved a strong and balanced refugee law a few months ago. What we need now is better enforcement. The Conservatives should be less focused on photo ops and more focused on enforcing the laws against human smuggling that we already have and give the RCMP the resources it needs to get the job done, instead of playing politics.

An attempt to play politics is precisely what this is. I am just getting to know many of my colleagues in this place from all across our great country and from all parties so I do feel pretty safe saying that many here in this room are either descendants of people who fled persecution and strife elsewhere in the world or have done so themselves.

When the masses of people from England and France came to this colder end of North America for the first time, many came to escape tyranny and persecution, and to seek a better life that was not available to them in their homelands. Those new arrivals, along with many first nations of this land, came together to be the founding nations of the country that we have today.

Our country is not always perfect but it is a shining beacon to the world, which is exactly why so many people are willing to risk their lives to come here, and that is precisely the point. By punishing the refugees who come here by such desperate means, the government will not reduce the desire of people from around the world to keep trying to come here. People will continue to want to come to Canada because of the greatness of this country. As long as we are this great and caring nation, people will continue to want to come and be part of it.

We should not punish those desperate refugees. We should punish the people who are trying to take advantage of their desperation. We must remember that the name of the bill is preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system.

My New Democratic colleagues and I call on the government to do as the bill's title says, go after the human smugglers, and do not punish the innocent refugees who are simply seeking what so many generations before us came to this country to seek, which is a better life and a future for their children and families.

● (1720)

[Translation]

Under this bill, designated claimants, including children, will automatically be detained when they arrive or at the moment they are so designated. Children! Detained! How does detaining children solve anything?

Moreover, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada will not move to review the detention for a year. People can be released only if it is established that they are refugees. The board orders their release after a year; even then, it cannot release them if the government is of the view that their identities are not established or if the minister determines that there are exceptional circumstances.

In my opinion, this is a clear violation of the charter. We know that the Supreme Court of Canada has already put a stop to mandatory detention without a review of the security certificate. These provisions will result in indefinite detentions in identity issues with no possibility of release until the minister determines that identity has been established. Arbitrary detention is also a serious breach of international treaties. We are therefore asking this government to drop this bill.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague rightly mentions that one of the reasons the bill would not dissuade people from trying to get to Canada is because of the greatness of this country. It is also because our world, in many parts, is disfigured by war, by poverty, by violence, by corruption and by a lack of protection for the most vulnerable in our world. That is another reason that people want to come to this country and another reason that the bill would not prevent that from happening.

Could my hon. colleague speak to the issue of family reunification and whether the bill would actually create a climate in this country where the reunification of children and their parents can be smoother, quicker and more efficient?

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

I think this would be one of the problems. It was noted earlier in the debate that this will be one of the fundamental problems with this bill. Not obstructing family reunification is an absolutely essential factor that must reflect the generosity of this country. Let us stop being afraid of immigrants, let us stop being afraid of the others. We know that people are always afraid of the others. Canadian citizens are even afraid of certain other Canadian citizens if they see photographs of them, on Facebook for example, with a leader of a party other than their own.

This trend is disturbing. We really have to start getting away from this kind of approach in this country we call Canada, since it does not deserve that reputation.

● (1725)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

There are things we wonder about on this side of the House. We now have a situation where someone who is very wealthy can apply under a process that the Conservatives brought in that is supposedly for the entrepreneur class. So someone who is wealthy can come to Canada, but someone who is poor, who experiences human rights violations, who suffers enormous problems, cannot. I wanted to check with my colleague whether he thinks that the way this Conservative government sees the entire immigration system and the issue of refugees is fair.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for his question.

One of the things that they do not seem to realize on the other side of the House is the fact that we already have democratic institutions in this country that deal with the situations they are currently concerned about. There are institutions that respond to their concerns, so why are they attacking the poor and vulnerable victims in this bill? This is what is most disturbing.

There is a concept in this country called the rule of law and this bill seems to be taking us away even from that. Canada's international obligations are very clear of course. As a result of signing the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Canada's obligations are clear. The Charter of the United Nations, and last time I checked Canada was a signatory to the Charter of the United Nations, calls on Canada to respect all human rights, the rights of every person. Again, this bill is taking us away from that great principle of international law.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin my discussion on Bill C-4 by clearly contradicting what has been a repeated false claim from the other side of the House for the folks who are listening in on this debate.

I know many Canadians are very concerned about the bill and about the repudiation of basic Canadian values, of our treaty obligations and a whole variety of things that a number of my colleagues have been raising in the House all day.

What we have heard from the Conservative side is the repeated claim that somehow the number of refugees accepted in Canada has increased.

Anyone watching this debate can go to the CIC website, a federal government website, to see the actual figures. When the Conservative government came to power, 32,500 refugee visas were issued in 2006. Years later, in 2010, there were 24,500 visas issued. People can verify this on the website themselves. Perhaps there are Conservatives striving to change the figures as we speak, but I certainly hope they will keep the figures as they are written now. We can see over the time the Conservatives have been in power is a steady reduction in the number of refugees who are accepted in Canada.

One of the fundamental values we have as Canadians is the belief that those who are living under human rights violations or living in

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war should have the ability to apply for refugee status and come to Canada. However, we can see, from the figures that the government publicizes on its own website, what Conservatives have done systematically over the last five years. They have ended the queue. They have told refugees that they will not come to Canada.

It is understandable in that context that the Conservatives have been driving down and closing the door to Canada around the world for those living in situations of extreme violence and difficulty and they have now put forward a draconian piece of legislation that punishes those few refugees who actually make it to our shores.

As we know, when the *Sun Sea* and the *Ocean Lady* came to British Columbia, those people who had risked their lives travelling across the Pacific Ocean were immediately interred. They were put in prison and detention camps. I was able to visit them as a parliamentarian to see the conditions for the men, women, children and families who had escaped Sri Lanka and the systematic ongoing human rights violations that are taking place in northern Sri Lanka.

That has been well-documented by international organizations. Even though they are not allowed into Sri Lanka, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have repeatedly spoken of the ongoing human rights violations taking place there now. There are serious assaults, sexual assaults, disappearances and forced imprisonment without trial of individuals in northern Sri Lanka.

Understandably, in that situation any of us would be concerned about our family's welfare and health. We would strive, by any means, to leave that kind of situation. Nobody in this room and no Canadian across the country who had their family under threat would say that it was fine to leave their family under threat.

Those refugees got on a leaky boat with very little water and food. They spent weeks and weeks coming across the Pacific Ocean to come to Canada. They came to Canada for one reason only. They came to Canada to be safe.

This bill would tell those refugees, now that the Conservatives have closed the door to refugees, as we have seen over the last five years, that if they come to Canada to be safe they will be put in prison for a long time.

● (1730)

These are draconian measures that are a complete repudiation of basic Canadian values. There is no process and there is no queue. The Conservatives have closed the doors, as we have seen from the Conservatives' own figures on their website. If women, men and children come to Canada, they will be put in prison, not to verify their identities, which might be a normal process, but to punish them.

The Conservatives make reference to the bill cracking down on human smuggling. The bill is cracking down on refugees. It is imposing penalties on refugees who come here with whatever means they have, the bit of savings they may have been able to take out of the country, despite the human rights violations and the threats to them and their families. They make it to Canada and the Conservatives decide that they will be severely punished. That is only one aspect of this bill that concerns New Democrats and only one aspect of why we are standing in the House speaking out against what the Conservative government is trying to do.

Government Orders

The second is the fact that the bill gives licence to the minister to basically determine, at any time, what he considers to be a political file. We have seen systematically, over the course of the past few years, the Conservatives play political games in all kinds of ways. The Conservatives seem to like to divide one Canadian from another, francophones from anglophones, westerners from Quebeckers and those in Atlantic Canada and new Canadians from those who may have been here, like my family, for a number of generations.

We have seen the Conservatives play what is in my estimation the lowest kind of politics with refugees who only strive to protect their families and come to safety. That is all they are attempting to do, to start a new life in Canada in safety. All they ask for is safety, to live without that constant threat of violence at any time, that constant and unpredictable sense that at any time they may have a family member thrown into prison arbitrarily with no trial, or that a family member may be assaulted or raped, or a family member might simply disappear. These are the realities that exist in that area. Although human rights observers are not allowed into the area, the anecdotal evidence coming out clearly indicates that the human rights violations continue, and everyone should be aware of that.

Refugees strive to come to Canada, so they get in leaky boats with little food and water. These boats are not very safe and they come across the Pacific. They land on our shores and a minister, who is above all influenced by political factors, decides whether they will be thrown into jail for a long time and pay huge fines with what is left of the resources the refugees were able to take with them when they left. That is the second component. We are talking about a draconian law, but we are also talking about giving full powers to a minister who has repeatedly intervened in the immigration system in a political way.

The immigration system is supposed to be sacrosanct. It is supposed to be judged by a system of values that the vast majority of Canadians share. Instead, we have seen the government use those powers in ways that are designed to only further the interests of the Conservative Party. That is also the reason why we are concerned about this bill. A number of members from the NDP have said very clearly why they are concerned about that.

The third issue that I will raise in the time I have left are the violations of international treaties that Canada has signed. I will cite, as many of my colleagues have, the UN convention relating to the status of refugees.

● (1735)

Article 31, it states in part, "The Contracting States shall not impose penalties...on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened".

This is a bad bill, it is a political bill and it is a draconian bill. That is why New Democrats are standing up for Canadian values and saying no to Bill C-4.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Madam Speaker, I believe the bill is part of a concerted effort to continue to shrink the number of immigrants and refugees coming to this country. Could he comment on whether he believes this is a bill to punish smugglers or to actually try to put the brakes on people coming to Canada in a concerted way by punishing them for trying to come here?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, when we look at the websites of the Conservatives, in which they talk about closing the door and about having reduced by 24% the number of refugees accepted over five years, it is very clear that this is their intent.

As my colleague knows, this is part of the overall drive that the government has taken. Conservatives campaigned with a sweater vest, but they have come out with a biker vest since they received a majority in May.

We have seen very clearly a switch in our immigration system away from family reunification, away from accepting refugees and more geared toward accepting temporary foreign workers who have no rights in Canada, who are often subject to abuses and who are shipped home once their contract has been completed. This is not the immigration system that we on this side of the House want to see.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite went on several detours, but one was Sri Lanka. He seemed to imply that the bill had something to do with this government's policy there. There are many responses, many of them already taken by this government to the very worrying situation there, particularly the situation of Tamil refugees who have suffered from the conflict over years and even decades.

Will the member opposite not agree that being soft on the human smugglers who brought two ships to the shores of British Columbia is not going to do anything to ameliorate the situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka or in other countries where they have taken refuge and that on the contrary, Tamils like other would-be refugees seeking a place in Canada want us to be generous by a system that respects and enforces the rules?

● (1740)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member knows that the bill does not crack down on human smuggling. The member knows that the Conservative government already has a whole range of measures to crack down on human smuggling. That is not the point or the intent of the bill.

Perhaps the member could speak to this when, hopefully, he will rise in the House and defend the bill around the issue of what the Conservative government has not done when it comes to the systematic human rights violations taking place at this very moment in Sri Lanka. The government has not said that the Sri Lankan government has a responsibility to allow in human rights observers so we can see first-hand what is happening on the ground.

The Conservative government has not taken the initiative to press the Sri Lankan government to stop the human rights abuses that are taking place. Anecdotally we are getting evidence from across northern Sri Lanka that this is taking place by the Sri Lankan military. The government has not taken action at all and that is a disservice both to Canadian values on human rights. It is also a disservice to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians of Tamil origin who want the government to take action and Canadians of all origins who believe that Canada should be a voice for human rights around the world.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have heard the debate over the past two days, it seems the crux of the issue is that when is a deterrence to be an effective one without sideswiping those who are most vulnerable. I commend my colleague for bringing some of that out. I commend other colleagues as well for trying to bringing out that argument.

I worry and fear that in some of the arguments being used there is a subtext, which is we will keep most everybody out. Unfortunately that may include the most vulnerable. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, this is where we have hopefully set debate in the House that will allow the government to understand to what extent Canadians are concerned about this.

We have seen the Conservative government, systematically over five years, close the door to refugees. This bill seems to close the door even further, and that is a fundamental repudiation of Canadian values.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agin-court, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one has to look back in our history and examine the people who have come to our country, the people who have immigrated and the people who have come on ships seeking refuge.

There are some examples of which the country might not be very proud. One of them was the *Komagata Maru* and the other one was the *MV St. Louis*. In both those examples, people were turned back. They were not even allowed to come to our shores. Years later governments apologized for what happened.

I cannot forget back in the mid-1980s when a ship full of Punjabis came from India. As soon as it arrived on our shores, and I believe it was July 1987, the then Conservative government made the headlines such as, "We have been invaded", or "They are arriving. Let's do away with them". The House, if I remember correctly, was brought back in the middle of the summer in order to discuss that.

I had the opportunity and pleasure of meeting some of those people, approximately 25 years later. I have seen them become productive citizens, with their families, who have gone on and are truly Canadians. Some of them even delved into politics.

It brings us to today's situation with Bill C-4. It seems that it is like the Tamils are invading, the Tamils are coming. It is the Tamils, the Tamils.

Let us examine why the Conservative government is raising the flag about the Tamils coming. Why are the headlines, "We have been invaded by the Tamils?" Why are we where we are today?

The Tamil community certainly feels it has been targeted. I remember when Stockwell Day was the leader of this party and he showed up with a brush and went on to say that most of the Tamils were terrorists. Children in schools in my area, where I have a large Tamil population, were scared that if they went to school, they would be called Tamils. There were incidents where young ones were called terrorists and were being abused by other children.

This went on and on over the years. I remember in the winter election of 2005-06, the Conservative Party and the minister today said that they would classify them as terrorists.

Government Orders

The government could have taken a look and said that there was a problem in Sri Lanka, that there was a civil war in Sri Lanka. It could have considered what it could do to intervene and find a solution. That was not the issue. The issue was helping Sri Lanka and the government of Sri Lanka, mostly Sinhalese, in order to alienate the Tamils, and that occurred. The Tamil community rose up and came out on the Hill and said that they wanted intervention. They wanted their government to speak, but nobody listened.

The Liberals also turned a blind eye to it. It was everybody's fault for not listening, the results that occurred after the termination of the civil war. Hundreds of thousands of people were interned in Sri Lanka. There were horror stories of combatants who were executed. A Channel 4 video shows the government of Sri Lanka executing combatants who were arrested. There were stories about women who were raped, children were separated from their parents, and the stories go on and on.

Even to this day, the Tamil community, not only in Canada but around the world, is calling for justice. Some of those people who were going through that hardship decided that enough was enough and that they were going to find a better life. They were going to seek refuge.

Some people, when they come to Canada, find different means. They go from country to country. They come in here with illegal passports. They arrive at our shores and say that they are seeking refuge.

These people decided, like the people of the *Komagata Maru*, back in the 1910s, that they were going to get on a boat and come to Canada. We had two boats, one in 2009, the *Ocean Lady* with 76 Tamils, and in 2010, the *Sun Sea* with 492 Tamils. "Well, we have been invaded by the 568 people who came to our shores, and there were more boats".

The government decided back then that it would bring in legislation that was draconian. It did not have the numbers then, but it has the numbers now. Now the government is saying that it is going to go ahead with it and not listen. It is going to steamroll the legislation right through and use it as a tool to fund raise.

• (1745)

In many constituencies we saw the ads that were played during the election. We see the outreach the Conservative Party is doing. It is using these two boats and this draconian bill in order to put a wedge right between the communities and between different ethnicities in Canada. It is going back to its reform base and saying, "Give us money in order for us to fight the war". What war? Five hundred and sixty people arrived on our shores. Is that a war?

We are debating a bill that died last year. The bill says to those people that if they come to Canada and the minister decides to arrest and detain them for a year, they cannot apply to land until five years later.

Government Orders

When people come to this country to seek refuge, they have a hearing. It can take anywhere from nine months to a year, maybe a little shorter, and then they have to apply in order to land. That is a humanitarian and compassionate process. They send their paperwork off to the case processing centre in Vegreville and it just sits and sits. If they are really, really lucky, maybe in four or five years they will be called in in order to land. If it is a concurrent application, which means the individual and his or her family are simultaneously applying, the individual lands and the family comes over.

As we have it right now, we are separating refugees who come to our shores for anywhere between four to five years. If they come on a boat, they cannot apply until five years later and maybe, if the situation in their country has changed in those five years, we will send them back.

For example, in 1939 the *St. Louis* came over full of Jewish people who were seeking refuge from Hitler. We might have kept them here for five years, but when 1945 rolls around, things have changed in Europe and we send them back. Where is the sense in all of this? People have to be looked at when they arrive here. We have to look at the conditions in their country at the time of their arrival.

Let us talk specifically about the 492 Tamils and the 76 Tamils. If this law had been in force they would not have been allowed to apply for landing until five years had passed. It would take five years plus another four to five years before they were landed. That is 10 years. For example, a mother comes over but has separated herself from her child, perhaps because she has lost her husband. The child is five years old when she leaves. She is stranded, but she will not see her child for 10 years. A five year old has been left behind. The child will not see his or her mother until he or she is 15. The child will grow up without a mother, without a parent, but when that child turns 15 and if the child is really lucky and the minister has not changed his mind, the child might come to Canada.

This is the draconian bill the Conservative government is bringing in.

A couple of years ago, an inspector general from the UNHCR, Mr. Arnaud Akodjenou, spoke to the citizenship and immigration committee. We asked him how Canada was reaching out to the UNHCR and asked whether people's credentials and information could be provided as to whether they are really refugees or not. I asked him whether Canada had reached out. The answer was that they had not had anything from Canada.

What Canada was doing, and what Canada is doing under the current Conservative government, is going back to Sri Lanka and asking the Government of Sri Lanka whether these people are legitimate refugees. Somebody who is fleeing a situation comes to Canada and instead of going to the UNHCR and the inspector in order to ask him what to do, we send information back to Sri Lanka. If these people were to be deported, they would be the first ones to be hurt.

When the *Sun Sea* came in 2010 there was an article which stated:

"The UNHCR supports the important work of law enforcement agencies in combating human smuggling..."

Mr. Mahecic of the UNHCR went on to say:

"It is nonetheless important to recognize that while refugees...are a distinct group with critical protection needs. It is not a crime to seek asylum."

The article continued:

Although the war has ended, the UNHCR says Tamils might still have legitimate reasons for seeking asylum.

Let me repeat that, "Tamils might still have legitimate reasons for seeking asylum".

• (1750)

The bill we are debating today is putting the Tamil community at risk. This is not only in Bill C-4—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member's time has elapsed. He may be able to elaborate during questions and comments.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the enthusiasm of my colleagues to get me on my feet. I also want to commend my colleague who sits in front of me for all the work he has done on immigration and certainly in his riding.

In the debate that has been going on here a term that has been bandied about is "queue jumping", which applies to the immigration system. When it comes to the issue of refugees, it is a concept that is not as tangible. I would like him to comment on that. Could he also make reference to what the Supreme Court decision would impose in this particular situation from this pending legislation?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Madam Speaker, I do not consider the people who come to Canada to seek refuge to be queue jumpers. There are a lot of people who have come to this country, including a lot of people in the House, to seek refuge.

In his question, my colleague from Newfoundland mentioned queue jumping. Let us examine queue jumping out of Sri Lanka. These are spousal cases. People are sponsoring their wives. There are a couple of files that I would like to bring to the attention of the House.

A file was opened in my office on September 17, 2010. Today we received an announcement saying, "Please be advised that this application has passed on paper screening stage and is presently in queue for review". The second one is dated March 11, 2011. To this day it is still in process. There is one from January 2011 and today we heard, "We are paper screening". There is one from October 18, 2010, and we heard today, "Please be informed that this file has been paper screened and it is in queue to be reviewed by an officer".

These are examples of people who are sponsoring their families, their wives and their husbands, and they are all from Sri Lanka. According to the minister's website it takes two months in the case processing centre in Mississauga and then it goes to Sri Lanka and it is supposed to be 13 months. These figures speak for themselves. It is not 13 months. It goes on.

If any member of the Conservative Party were to stand and say that he or she does not think the Conservatives are targeting the Tamil community, I have news for that member. When Bill C-4 came forward the Conservatives did not even have the kindness to reach out to the Canadian Tamil Congress.

● (1755)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the speech from my colleague. He did point out the danger inherent in other aspects of how the government approaches the human rights violations that continue to go on in Sri Lanka. What does he think the Canadian government should be doing to stop what are significant systemic and ongoing human rights violations taking place in northern Sri Lanka?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Madam Speaker, before this bill was presented, the responsibility of a sound government, the responsibility of this government, was to reach out to the Tamil community and say, "Let us work with you", to reach out to the stakeholders.

Just this afternoon I was on the phone with the Canadian Tamil Congress, the national congress of Canadian Tamils that represents 250,000 Tamils in this country. They do not know which person called them. No, I am sorry, the Conservative government has lost their phone number and their coordinates. The Conservatives have not called them. They should be ashamed of themselves.

If the government is going to bring in any bill, any legislation, it has to go to the stakeholders. No stakeholders were consulted.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Madam Speaker, let me start by saying that my speech today will stress a fundamentally philosophical tone. Thus, I do not intend to debate the form and the letter of the bill we have before us. My analysis is going to essentially look at background, culture and history. I will still refer to some of the concepts and terms used in the bill, but not more than that.

Although the purpose of the proposed legislative measures is officially to prevent smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system, we can easily see that a number of the elements that are tackled in the bill actually deal with immigration principles in the wider sense. Given the intrusive nature of those measures and the delegation of power that allows decisions to be made arbitrarily, we cannot avoid feeling that this draconian trend is a harbinger of the initiatives that this government is going to introduce in the coming years. This is not the first issue to show this shift to the right.

Although the wording recognizes the social issue underlying the need for such a bill, it seems that it is no more than a pretext for imposing restrictive measures intended to reposition the Canadian government in immigration matters. If we study the bill before us, we can easily see that far too little effort is made to crack down on crime, that is, criminal wrongdoing or human trafficking. Rather it is a roundabout attempt to regulate immigration and the arrival of newcomers in Canada.

My thoughts are thus informed by the historical background of immigration to Canada. I was born in the community of Uashat, an Innu community 700 kilometres north of Quebec City, and so my remarks will also be influenced by that concept.

If the rules the Conservatives want to establish had been in place in centuries past, Canada as we know it today would simply not exist.

Government Orders

The country and the society we live in today are the heirs of the "irregular arrival"—I am using the terms used in the bill—of immigrants to the continent. In short, a good number of Canadians, if not almost all Canadians, are themselves descended from sometimes massive, uncontrolled, disorderly and even self-interested immigration. When I say that I come from Uashat it is important to understand—and this is what history teaches us—that Jacques Cartier very likely landed close to the current location of my community of Uashat. History also tells us that the Innu displayed boundless tolerance and acceptance. They even lavished the new arrivals with care, and the existence of so many Canadians today serves only to support this undeniable fact.

Let us simply imagine that in the 16th century, when Jacques Cartier arrived, new arrivals suffering from advanced malnutrition had been put into preventive detention—so that their files could be reviewed—or that the authorities refused to consider the cases of immigrants suspected of the slightest criminal activity. There was no bureaucracy or those kinds of procedures at the time, but it serves to highlight a number of truths. It is unthinkable, is it not? We also understand that Canada was very likely populated by people who simply wanted to leave Europe or who had every reason to do so.

And yet this is what we are witnessing today: measures that run counter to the generous and open character of Canada, where traditionally we have not had immigration policies designed to circumscribe the admission of newcomers to the land. Traditionally, the Innu had a somewhat broad, somewhat vague vision of the concept of land ownership, which is still true today. So when the newcomers showed up, they simply shared the land, which was huge in any event, as well as the resources. They exhibited unbounded openness. This is the approach that should be taken in measures to regulate immigration to Canada, in keeping with that traditional intent and the interaction that took place several centuries ago.

That said, it is important to consider the social aspect that underlies the enactment of legislation of this nature. My eyes stopped on certain provisions that even provide for an inference of criminal activity or criminal organizations in the group. So there is very little guidance here, to my mind, and without a lengthy preamble, there is no definition of certain concepts in this new bill.

● (1800)

Without a lengthy preamble, there is no definition of certain concepts in this new bill.

Given the coercive nature of the proposed legislation and its excessive delegation of discretionary powers to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, it stifles much of the immigration we see in Canada. The door has been opened too wide. The definition and the discretion are too broad. Everything is subject to interpretation and there is nothing objective about any of it.

When taken as a whole, and in its present form, the bill contravenes Canada's obligations in relation to human rights and the rights of refugees, and breaks with a Canadian policy, we might even say a Canadian tradition, that is firmly entrenched and that takes a positive view of immigration and the admission of refugees, a century-old tradition.

Government Orders

As I understand the text of the bill, we would be well advised to reassess a number of the proposed parameters for the methods of punishing human trafficking that it contains and transfer authority to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which already has skilled investigators among its members, and allocate it a budget proportionate to the workload associated with managing human trafficking cases within Canada.

The legislation, which has gone off track, should therefore have certain provisions removed, at the very least, and this authority should be transferred to an organization that has already demonstrated its investigative prowess in the past.

The bill clearly will not reduce the extent of human trafficking within Canada; rather, it will bring with it a lot of stigma that will ultimately be borne by all immigrants and legitimate refugees in the country.

• (1805)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Manicouagan for his excellent presentation and philosophical approach.

A number of years ago, when Preston Manning led a previous iteration of the Conservative party, he said that Canada had too many immigrants. A caricature appeared in the *Globe and Mail* of an aboriginal grand chief with his arms crossed saying, “*My words exactly*”.

I would say to the member for Manicouagan that this is not an accurate portrayal of Aboriginals today. The generosity shown by Aboriginals to those who first came here still underpins the philosophy of the First Nations and has long been the philosophy of our party, the NDP, on this side of the House.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is true, the community I come from makes it a point of honour to ensure that these traditional philosophies remain the basis for our values and what the people in my riding have access to. So, yes, it is still true in 2011. The Innus from Uashat make it a point of honour to show great openness to others, which also benefits us.

Mrs. Sadia Grogulé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech which, although rather philosophical, was a reminder of just how truly generous aboriginal people are.

Can my colleague explain why, in his opinion, this bill is completely unconstitutional?

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Madam Speaker, this is perhaps the lawyer in me speaking, but upon reading the proposed legislation I came across a number of areas that could be challenged, and I can tell you that right now this bill will certainly cause more problems than it will provide solutions, and that it is well outside the current scope of the legislation.

As a lawyer, it is clear to me that this legislation could be challenged, and I am probably not the only person in Canada to feel this way. From a constitutional standpoint—and again this goes beyond the scope of my current remarks—you can believe me when I say that the constitutionality of this legislation is questionable.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have before me the short title of the act, which is “Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act”. Yet, my colleague's speech was quite relevant and did not cover smugglers so much as how refugees are accepted in our country. I would have been proud if my colleague had said that this act would enable us to welcome settlers as we did many years ago, but that was not quite the scope of his speech.

I would like my colleague to share with us his reaction to the difference or the gap between the title of the act and how refugees are welcomed.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Simply reading the title of the bill or its subtitle, we might consider that someone wants to get tough on crime, but at the end of the day, when we look at it, we can easily see that there is too little focus on smugglers and the problem they represent. Misappropriation takes place and can be seen on the ground, but too much effort is put into repressing and strictly controlling new arrivals to Canada. This can be distorted and deserves a full re-evaluation.

[English]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Madam Speaker, like many of my colleagues I spent the summer in my riding, Pierrefonds—Dollard, a riding in which more than 30% of the people are immigrants who have come to Canada from all over the world to search for a better way of life for themselves and for their children. I therefore often had the opportunity to take up discussions about issues relating to immigration. I heard a lot of frustrations and concerns about the management of immigration in Canada.

• (1810)

[Translation]

My introductory remarks may appear unrelated to the bill being discussed today, and I understand that the connection may seem tenuous, however I ask for your indulgence. I cannot open my remarks today without relaying the disappointment felt by my fellow citizens at our failure today to discuss their true concerns, such as immigration application processing times, the non-recognition of foreign credentials, and the dearth of funding for immigrant settlement and adaptation assistance.

Now that I have conveyed this displeasure, and since the discussion today concerns not this issue but rather coercive action against refugees, I shall now address Bill C-4.

[English]

I would like now to turn to research from Amnesty International, which shows that in Australia, unsympathetic views from the population toward asylum seekers are not racially motivated, nor do they stem from a lack of compassion; rather, the research found that community fear of asylum seekers stems from the media and both major political parties.

Government Orders

I think it is fair to suspect that our own government is guilty of diffusing such fears. Let us think back, for example, to 2009 and 2010, when immigrants arrived off the shores of B.C. in two different vessels, and the Conservative government of the day showed fear that a significant number of those individuals might have links with the Tamil Tigers, a listed terrorist organization. On that particular matter, Amnesty International reminds us that it is legal to seek asylum by boat under international and domestic law, and that nearly all asylum seekers who arrive by boat are real refugees.

This bill would in fact create two classes of refugees: one class of refugees who arrive by boat, and another class made up of all the others. In this regard, the Canadian Council for Refugees states that this is discriminatory and contrary to the charter, which guarantees equality before the law.

[Translation]

My colleague from Saint-Lambert made a very interesting remark: people do not necessarily choose how they escape a natural disaster or menacing regime; they take the first opportunity that arises to save their lives or that of their children. I know that it is inconceivable, but this bill would create two classes of refugees based on method of arrival.

One could be forgiven for wondering why the government has introduced this bill when it has made previous attempts to pass similar legislation. Why has the government not opted instead to introduce changes to assist in combating traffickers rather than refugees? I just alluded to the disparity in the treatment reserved for the two classes of refugees under this bill, but more to the point, this government is engaging in the rhetoric of fear. They refer to immigrants as potential terrorists. They speak of security rather than of issues involving immigration and citizenship. And yet, I believe this to be a matter of immigration and citizenship rather than national security.

On another note, I should stress that this bill would allow for the arbitrary detention of refugees. This matter has been discussed at length, so I will not belabour the point, but this bill could authorize the detention of refugees on the basis of the minister's suspicions or the refugee's method of arrival. I would however like to focus specifically on the treatment of children under this bill.

I join my voice to that of the Canadian Counsel for Refugees and many other organizations that condemn the raft of measures proposed in Bill C-4, measures that fly in the face of our obligations to refugees and, of course, to children. Indeed, in addition to the proposed measures regarding detention, this bill would slow down the family reunification application process and prohibit applications to travel abroad for a period of several years.

On the matter of child detention, the Australian Human Rights Commission tabled a brief in May 2004 in the Australian parliament stating that child refugee detainees' rights were repeatedly violated. More specifically, the Commission reported that Australian immigration detention law fails to protect children's mental health, provide appropriate health care, protect children's right to an education, and does not necessarily protect children in need of assistance or those with a disability.

Children arriving in Canada already face a number of challenges, even if they arrive under optimal conditions. They have to learn the language and adapt to the climate, a new culture and a new school system that is very different, and often they then have to help their parents and family integrate into this new country when they are sometimes the only one in the family who knows the language or the culture. With these coercive measures, children will hardly be arriving under optimal conditions conducive to their integration into the country.

We have every right to wonder if Bill C-4 aims to protect the rights of these children whom the government plans to so summarily detain if they are refugees that are suspicious or arrive by boat.

Our country signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and I am very proud of that fact. This convention states that signatory states must take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children and to prevent all types of abuse, neglect or negligent treatment. Those protection measures are not being discussed today. We are talking about Bill C-4 and the possibility of detaining children, but we are not talking about what else will be put in place to protect these children who may be put into detention centres. What will be done to ensure that these children receive an education and care? That is not being discussed, and that is very worrying.

The New Democratic Party promised Canadians that it would develop a fair, efficient, transparent and accountable immigration system and that it would put an end to restrictive immigration measures rooted in secrecy and arbitrary decisions by ministers.

• (1815)

We also think it is important to increase resources to reduce the unacceptable backlogs in processing immigration applications, with an emphasis on speeding up family reunification. These are certainly not priorities that are reflected in Bill C-4.

The problem is that the Conservatives are saying that this bill will help reduce the magnitude of human trafficking. In reality, the bill as currently worded puts too much power in the hands of the immigration minister and unfairly penalizes refugees, as we discussed just now with my colleague. We see more than just measures for reducing trafficking. We also see measures that penalize newcomers.

My colleagues and I agree that we have to address trafficking and smugglers, but we are seeing more than that. The thing that worries me about this bill is the way refugees are treated.

Refugee determination by independent decision-makers is a fundamental aspect of a fair justice system. The way we receive refugees is often cited by the international community as a model of fair treatment, but this bill risks putting us in another category. It would not be the last time we disappointed the international community.

Can the minister tell us when the government is going to stop going after refugees and focus only on the criminals?

Government Orders

● (1820)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard for another fine speech in the House.

I know that her riding, like mine, is quite diverse. I would like to know what she thinks of the immigration system as it is presently managed by the Conservative government. In my riding, we receive many complaints about the fact that it is a poorly managed system and that it penalizes new Canadians. We are now seeing bills along the same lines. I would like to know what she thinks of how this government is managing the immigration system.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for asking me this question as it gives me another opportunity to highlight the concerns of the people of my riding.

Wait times are horrible. People who are refused rarely understand why, and cannot speak to anyone about the reason for the refusal or what steps to take next.

People are unable to have their credentials recognized and it is shameful every time a fellow citizen tells me about this problem. In fact, we seek out skilled people. We go to their country and tell them to come to Canada where they will have an incredible quality of life as well as work. When they get here, after leaving behind everything and trusting our representatives abroad, they are unable to find work and their credentials are not recognized. They are intelligent people who have been trained at no cost to our country, and they are not allowed to work.

These are just a few examples of the frustrations of citizens in my riding as well as in other ridings. I hope we will be able to address this soon.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the introduction of Bill C-4, the minister and others on the government benches talked about how this bill would target the profiteers and smugglers. We in the Liberal Party and, I believe, most, if not all, members of the opposition have indicated that they are not really the primary victims. The primary victims are the refugees seeking asylum. I would suggest that the number of profiteers or smugglers, which this bill is actually named after and, apparently, targeting, who will be impacted is pretty close to zero, if not zero.

Does the member want to comment on the title of the bill and on how the government seems to be of the opinion that this bill targets profiteers or smugglers?

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothé: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

If this bill were simply about smugglers, we would not be having this debate today. Since so many of us are raising our concerns about the treatment of refugees, there is obviously something wrong with the bill and we are not ready to support it.

I would like to add something here. Yesterday, I spoke to a 10-year-old. He told me that we adopted the British criminal law system in Canada because we felt it was more fair and allowed for a person

to be considered innocent until proven guilty. We even read a page from his history book. It was wonderful. When we finished reading, I kept myself from saying that it could all change soon. I hope that we will still be proud in the future to read our history books that we are innocent until proven otherwise. This bill, which would lead to detaining people on suspicion or because they arrived by boat, does not convince me that I will still be proud to read a history book with a child in a few years.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West may begin his intervention but I will have to interrupt him at 6:30.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I guess I will wind down this debate here today. A lot of facts in the bill are still out there in terms of specifics that the minister could do to really ramp up his powers. However, I would like to talk more about the personal aspect of this.

I used to work at the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County and I dealt with not just new Canadians but sometimes people who came through the refugee system. It is important that we talk a little about the people who would be affected because, at the end of the day, some of them may be our neighbours, friends and family. They are not just soulless people looking to sponge off Canada, which is often the perception presented by those who are for this bill indirectly. It is there. I can feel it in the House here that they understand people have a certain advantage to take from Canada versus a contribution.

We must remember that refugees come here because they or their families are under physical threat of rape, torture or a series of different things. They often give up every cent they have for the chance at a better life. Sometimes they do not know the language. Sometimes they do not trust the people in whom they are putting their families' lives but they know it is a better chance for them and their survival at that moment in time than the alternative in their own home country.

We can just imagine that the place where we grew up, where we had our family and where we wanted to have a future becomes too dangerous for us to stay. People decide to risk everything to go to a country like Canada which has been a beacon in many respects for the globe and here we are out to punish them.

I cannot think of a single refugee, be it a man or a woman, who walked into the doors of that agency who would have benefited from jail time. I cannot think of a single instance when that would have been necessary for the people I served. I can only imagine the horror situations that we will face when we lock up families up to a year or even for a few months.

There is mental, physical and emotional grief and stress of not knowing one's future not only on the streets of the country where one may be dependent upon social services and other not for profits that remarkably help people every single day, but if the refugees go through our system they become Canadian citizens, taxpayers and contributors. Many have come through this system and have left a mark on our country.

If these people are deemed not to be valid through our system, I do not want them going back worse. I do not want them going back with more trauma. I am willing to face the consequences that we live in a world that we cannot turn our backs on. There are evil people out there who take advantage of people on a regular basis, but those victims do not need to be turned away. They need to be supported. We are on one planet here.

We seem to forget that. We think it is a free ride to come over here and people will have a great ticket and never contribute. That is not what is happening on the streets and that is not what is happening with our immigration policies. We know that when people come here they often work harder, take less social assistance and often contribute more. They are like anybody else. They have their chances and once they get here they take those chances and put them to good use.

In the youth programs I used to run, we had eight youth who were born in Canada and making bad decisions. We put them with eight youth who were new to Canada and could not figure things out. We mixed them together and our program had over a 90% success rate where they either went back to school or found a job. The reason was that there was a thirst from the new people who were coming here to have a better opportunity. They remembered some of the war-torn countries they came from and the people they left behind who they missed so dearly, but they had to move on with their lives and, in moving on with their lives, they were grateful to a country that had taken them in.

We are a multicultural country, so when we see these issues and the connections to families that are being broken, that is wrong because we have asked people to come here.

• (1825)

We cannot sustain our society without immigration and without refugees coming here. We cannot sustain the lifestyle that we enjoy right now. That is a fact. We cannot afford our pension system. We cannot afford the trading deficits we have. We cannot afford any of those things. Therefore, we need a workable system. The refugees coming through this system are good people who contribute to our society.

To intern people for up to a year is wrong. What would happen if parents and families are broken up and some are released and others are not?

Let us think of refugees as contributing to and not taking away from our society.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member. He will have four minutes when the bill comes back for debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have recently learned from a report commissioned by the Minister of National Defence that the government plans to cut jobs in the Canadian Forces. This report was produced by a committee that was struck in June 2010, and headed up by General Andrew Leslie, to plan the restructuring of the Canadian Forces.

This report proposes radical measures supposedly intended to try to make the forces more efficient. It recommends massive cuts to military and civilian jobs and the transformation of thousands of stable, full-time jobs into part-time positions, but according to General Leslie, it is merely to trim the fat.

The general recommends that the Minister of National Defence reassign or simply eliminate 11,000 positions among the 145,000 existing positions. In addition, at least 4,500 reservists who currently work full time would have to fill precarious, part-time positions. Lastly, DND would also have to reduce its use of external consultants, who are often retired officers, by 30%.

This favoured consultant of the Minister of National Defence goes much further. He recommends being prepared to accept the risk of completely eliminating certain organizations of the Canadian Armed Forces. Given these recommendations, there is truly cause for concern for the members of our valiant army who have dedicated themselves to serving our country. During the last election campaign, the NDP committed to maintaining DND's budget, and that is the position that my colleagues and I are defending today.

The Valcartier military base is located in my riding of Portneuf—Jacques Cartier. The base employs approximately 7,000 men and women, civilian and military. As a result of the leak of this fairly disturbing report, all of these people want to know whether the government is really going to cut their already tight operating budget.

The Valcartier military base is home to the Royal 22^e Régiment, which has a very special place in the hearts of Quebecers because of its remarkable history. It is the only regular regiment in Canada that is entirely francophone. Since it was created, the members of the Royal 22^e Régiment have participated in virtually all of Canada's military operations, including the two world wars and, of course, the war in Afghanistan.

The Royal 22^e Régiment is made up of approximately five battalions of soldiers, including two reserve battalions. Most of its members are deployed to the Valcartier base.

In addition to the Royal 22^e Régiment, the Valcartier base also houses the Valcartier Army Cadet Summer Training Centre. All these young people are the army's future and they deserve to have access to the best resources and the best instructors. If we go by General Leslie's report, essential services for these passionate young cadets could suddenly be taken away as a result of draconian cuts to staff.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Valcartier military base is a major economic engine for neighbouring communities, such as Shannon and Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier. Each position that is cut will likely have a very negative effect on the citizens of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

General Andrew Leslie's report proposes many brutal cuts, and the citizens of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier are very concerned. The 7,000 employees of the Valcartier military base demand to know whether the government will follow General Leslie's recommendations and what the consequences of implementing these massive cuts will be.

Can the Minister of National Defence or his representative confirm to people in my region that there will be no cuts to the Valcartier base?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for her important question.

The government understands just how much the Valcartier base drives the economy of its region, of Quebec and of Canada. We also understand the role that this military base has played in our past and present military history. I would like to thank all our Canadian Forces members from Valcartier and from the Royal 22nd Regiment who participated in the mission in Afghanistan and for helping with the effects of the flooding of the Vallée-du-Richelieu last spring. But the future and the evolution of this base are part of an overall Canadian armed forces strategy that is national, of course.

In 2008, our government articulated its vision for the Canadian Forces in the Canada First Defence Strategy. This strategy calls on the Canadian Forces to achieve a level of ambition that enables it to meet the country's defence needs, enhance the safety of Canadians and support the government's foreign policy and national security objectives.

To deliver on this level of ambition, the Canadian Forces will maintain its ability to conduct six core missions: conduct daily domestic and continental operations; support a major international event in Canada; respond to a major terrorist attack; support civilian authorities during a crisis, as we saw in Vallée-du-Richelieu this year; lead or conduct a major international operation for an extended period, in Afghanistan and Libya, for example; deploy forces in response to a crisis elsewhere in the world for shorter periods.

To facilitate the military's efforts in meeting this level of ambition, the government committed to providing stable, predictable funding as well as the right equipment and training, and also to working in partnership with Canadian industry. The Government of Canada remains committed to providing the men and women of the Canadian armed forces with what they need to take on the challenges of the 21st century.

Since this government took office, the defence budget has grown by almost \$8 billion—an average of over \$1 billion a year. Of course, the Valcartier military base felt the effects of these increases. After years of this unprecedented growth, Canadians are tightening their belts from coast to coast to coast in the face of the global economic downturn and the slow global recovery.

So too must the Department of National Defence in order to make the best use of tax dollars. Canadians expect the government to be even more vigilant with their money during tough economic times. As stated in Budget 2011, the Department of National Defence is on track to achieving the savings required to meet the commitment to restrain growth in defence spending by: increasing its efficiency and effectiveness of program delivery, focusing on its core role, and meeting the priorities of Canadians.

We cannot do everything, and the department used the 2010 strategic review process to examine its spending to identify savings of \$525 million in 2012-13 and \$1 billion annually thereafter, starting in 2013-14.

• (1835)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the parliamentary secretary but I am going to give the floor to the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. The parliamentary secretary can then comment.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Madam Speaker, I will be generous and ask my question again so that I will have the opportunity to discuss this issue with the hon. member. What I have been hearing, at least up to this point, is “increase effectiveness”. This seems to be an administrative euphemism for “major cuts to staff”. I do not know yet whether these cuts will directly affect the Valcartier military base. That is what I would like to know. I will give the hon. member the opportunity to answer this question.

• (1840)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Madam Speaker, the government remains committed to supporting the needs of soldiers in order to allow our troops to continue performing the important tasks we assign them. More than ever, during these difficult economic times, the department is taking its role as a steward of public resources very seriously. It is doing everything possible to ensure sound financial management of taxpayers' money by spending responsibly.

Every government department and agency, including the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, will have to manage their activities within the constraints imposed in the operating budgets. Following the department's participation in the strategic review, millions of taxpayer dollars will be saved over the next few years.

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, this summer the case of the Maeng family gave Canadians an opportunity to observe and reflect upon certain aspects of our immigration system. Specifically, Canadians reflected upon the inadmissibility of an individual on the grounds that he or she “might reasonably be expected to cause excessive demand on health or social services.”

When this Moncton family was denied permanent residency and ordered to return to South Korea, Canadians were shocked. The Maengs seem to be a perfect example of the Canadian immigrant success story. They are successful small business owners. Their eldest child was a student at Dalhousie University, on his way to becoming a dentist. They lived in Canada for seven years and had obviously established roots in, and a deep connection with, our community.

Canadians were most concerned about the reason for the family's residency denial, the fact that the youngest child, Sung-Joo is autistic. It was determined that the boy would be too much of a burden on the health care system and other aspects of our social safety net.

When I rose in this House on June 7, I asked the minister if he would reconsider the decision to send the Maengs back to Korea. At the time the minister said that he would not comment on the case but claimed that we have a fair process and that the Maengs had been through that process.

I should note that the minister later decided to grant the family a temporary reprieve for three years while the permanent residency process continues. I congratulate the minister on that decision.

While Canadians were happy with this change of heart, the questions remain. I think most, if not all, Canadians agree with the principle that a person should not be granted permanent residency status if the person represents an unacceptable or extraordinary burden on our social safety net. However, it is in the narrow application of this principle that we raise concerns.

My question tonight is directly related to the Maeng case. Why is autism considered a condition that would place an undue burden on our system? I think many Canadians would be surprised or even insulted to hear that their government considers autism to be such a drain.

People with autism spectrum disorder, ASD, are not considered sick by most Canadians. ASD is a developmental disability that may require intervention from medical and educational professionals. However, Canadians realize that autistic individuals make great contributions to our society.

With the proper treatment and resources, autistic individuals can and do excel in life and work. They can be productive members of our society. They are always cherished individuals in our communities.

This Sunday people across Canada and in the United States will gather together for the fourth annual Walk Now for Autism Speaks. I will be joining that walk at Nat Bailey Stadium in Vancouver Kingsway to show my support for better government policy and more resources for people with autism and their families.

People with ASD are valued for their economic contributions and are important members of our families. Our lives are enriched by the perspectives and diversity that come with sharing our lives with people with all kinds of developmental disabilities.

Upon reflecting on this rule, I am also reminded of a case in my own riding where a live-in caregiver could not bring her daughter to live with her due to a medical condition that had developed in the

years since she had come to Canada. After years of being separated from her family, toiling away in Canada working as a caregiver on the promise that her family could join her, this rule kicked in and her dreams were crushed.

There is a very simple solution to this problem. Have the family get medical checks at the beginning of the process and accept that in the intervening years one or more may become sick. It is not very much to ask.

Clearly there is an inherent injustice in the application of this rule. Will the minister commit to review the application of the rules governing inadmissibility on the grounds of presenting a burden to the Canadian system in an effort to make it fair for everyone?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond this evening to the question put and also to comment that I look forward to working with my hon. colleague on the Standing Committee on Citizenship Immigration and Multiculturalism.

I appreciate the depth with which he is at least attempting to put forward in a positive way. He and I could spend some time dealing with the scope and magnitude of the issues that the Immigration and Refugee Board faces when it has to make decisions with respect to individuals.

I really do want to try to address the issue. It is an interesting point and one that deserves an answer, but it is very difficult. We are not in any way, shape or form allowed to divulge personal information, the personal decision-making process about individuals or families who make application to come to Canada, under many different magnitudes and many different opportunities. I find it difficult, based on the fact that the hon. member has pointed out a very specific case. He has the details. He has obviously been given authority by the family to speak to those details. We, as a government, are not in a position to do that.

Quite frankly, I do find that somewhat frustrating and difficult. In my years as parliamentary secretary at Citizenship and Immigration, I have noticed time and time again that members of the opposition speak to individual cases. Many of those times, those questions that arise during question period are not cases that have been brought forward by that individual to either myself or to the minister to review or at least accept the issue, the concern, on a private basis. Generally speaking, they are done in a way that those issues have been brought out through the media. The individuals, the families have gone to the media to discuss these issues and think it is a way that will somehow assist them in their case.

I can assure the House that it does not assist anyone. It does not assist the government, or the individual or the family. It certainly does not assist members of Parliament who have brought these forward, unless members do so because it would somehow assist them in their goals as opposition members to try to make the government look bad. I am certainly not suggesting that my colleague, the critic of the opposition party, is doing it for that reason. I do not believe that, but I believe a number of members of Parliament bring these issues up during question period to do that.

Adjournment Proceedings

I ask this evening that all opposition members, who determine that cases like this, cases that they believe will offer them some sort of media hype or media attention or assist them in their own careers, not to do it in this way.

The way we should be working through this process is simply by speaking to each other, obviously an individual member of Parliament from the opposition speaking with myself as the parliamentary secretary or speaking with the minister in order to try to assist them with the individual case. It really makes it difficult for me to speak to an issue that the member has brought forward with respect to illness on the one hand and on the other hand in his specific case, the issue of autism and the impact that has on an individual's opportunity to come to Canada, whether it be through permanent residency or whether it would be to study, whatever that issue may be.

However, as members of the opposition know, before they stand to ask these questions, they will not get a specific answer. We are simply not allowed to proceed and put forward an individual member's private issues under our Privacy Act.

• (1845)

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I am not raising an individual specific case tonight; I am raising an issue of policy.

As well, I think it is fair to say that when individuals are frustrated by poor government policy, they often use the media and the opposition to raise those issues, and that is how positive change is made in our country.

People with autism deserve our support and nurturing. They deserve our understanding, welcoming and full integration in all aspects of our society.

Canada should play a leading role on the world stage by demonstrating that autism is something to be understood and accepted. Autism must never be a barrier to citizenship.

With respect to live-in caregivers, the only just approach is to assess the medical conditions of families once and before they make profound sacrifices. Live-in caregivers should be united with their families immediately upon entry to Canada. We must stop this unjustified and painful separation of families.

Caregivers should be granted permanent residency immediately upon entry to Canada. They should be able to bring spouses and children with them and their family members should also get work permits.

Current government policy treats people with autism as undesirable citizens. Current government policy separates families. Keeping families together is the NDP way. Why is not the government's way?

• (1850)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Madam Speaker, I can absolutely go through a host of issues, resolutions and legislation that we have passed in the House of Commons that deal exactly with what the member is speaking to.

I would suggest to him that there is a third way for us to work through these issues, and that is in consultation with each other. We did it with Bill C-11, the refugee reform act, and we did it with Bill

C-35, the crooked consultants act. In the last Parliament, with a minority government, these two major pieces of legislation went through with unanimous consent from all parties. I suggest to him that the third way to do that is for us to sit down and continue to work together, to work in committee to bring these issues together, and we will work as a government to try to solve them.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians across the country are talking about fracking, meaning hydraulic fracturation, and the shale gas industry. They want to know what the fracking process entails. They want to know how it is being done and the potential impacts of fracking. They also want to know where it is being done. Most of all, Canadians want assurance that there are systems in place to protect their environment and their health.

Last year the former environment minister told us that shale gas regulations were "a work in progress", despite the fact that hydraulic fracturation has been used in Canada for years. When I asked the government about the status of these regulations on June 22 of this year, no timeline was given. Therefore, I am here tonight to ask the government again. Regulations have been promised; it has been over a year; when can we actually see these regulations?

The current minister said that the government would engage itself on the issue. In fact, he said on June 16, with respect to shale gas projects, "The federal government has an interest and can involve itself when a threat is perceived and reported". When I asked a question on shale gas regulations, the response on June 22 of this year by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment was, "Environment Canada officials have been given the opportunity to comment on provincial and territorial environmental assessments".

At the beginning of the summer, the government clearly stated that ministry officials were looking into the issue of environmental and health impacts of fracking and that the government was prepared to respond to threats to the environment. However, only a few weeks later it announced massive cuts at the department. How will the government respond when it is cutting 11% of Environment Canada's staffing positions and 20% of its budget?

On top of this, it has announced a 43% budget cut at the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. This cut will cripple the agency's ability to prepare for and respond to threats to the environment, including proposed new oil and gas projects like hydraulic fracturation, which is an exploratory mining technique.

It is important to keep in mind that during the 2011 Speech from the Throne, the Canadian Conservative government reasserted its commitment to improving federal environmental assessments, which makes it even more disturbing that it is now actually gutting the very institutions that carry out this environmental oversight.

Adjournment Proceedings

Many of the concerns that Canadians have with fracking have to do with potential impacts on our drinking water systems, but again the government has announced cuts that will come to programs like the action plan on clean water, even though the former environment minister said last March that this plan was a priority. The government has delayed the regulations on fracking and now has made cuts to programs that will protect drinking water. These are the very issues that these kinds of regulations should be addressing. It is clearly problematic, and I hope that the parliamentary secretary will be able to shed some light on the reasons behind the government's actions.

Earlier today I asked the minister in the House if he would provide parliamentarians with the analysis that proves his claims that Environment Canada's functions will not be affected by these massive cuts. He chose not to answer the question, nor has he been able to point to what the government considers core programming. I consider these programs core programming. Considering the wide range of program cuts that are expected, it does not seem as though the government considers any of the programs to be a core function of this department.

Therefore, I ask the parliamentary secretary this: can she provide the evidence I have asked for time and time again in the House on how the government will keep our environment healthy and our water safe, and when will the government move forward with the fracking regulations it said it was going to create?

• (1855)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, shale gas is an important strategic resource that could provide numerous economic benefits to Canada. Canada's abundant supply of clean burning natural gas would help strengthen Canada's position as a clean energy superpower.

Our government recognizes that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Our government has taken action in several areas to ensure stewardship of our natural environment, including our action plan for clean water and our clean air regulatory agenda.

At the same time, the member opposite must be cognizant that jurisdiction ultimately lies with the provinces to determine how or if shale gas resources will be developed. Provinces also manage environmental impacts of resource development through their regulatory systems.

Federally, involvement in resource development falls under the mandate of several departments, agencies and boards.

Environment Canada is working within its jurisdiction to examine potential environmental issues related to shale gas development to further our government's strong commitment to the conservation of Canada's natural heritage and the safe, responsible and sustainable development of our nation's natural resources.

Via the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Environment Canada provides expertise and advice in relation to both federal and provincial environmental assessments.

To help understand any potential environmental impacts of shale gas development, the Minister of the Environment has undertaken the following initiatives.

The minister has recommended a proposal to the Council of Canadian Academies for an independent, expert panel assessment of the state of scientific knowledge on potential environmental impacts from the development of Canada's shale gas resources.

The minister has also asked Environment Canada officials to develop an in-house work plan to examine any potential environmental aspects of shale gas development.

Working with industry on this matter is also important. I welcome the recent announcement by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, or CAPP, of its guiding principles for hydraulic fracturing.

On September 6 of this year, CAPP announced that it will support the proactive disclosure of fracturing fluid additives. Such voluntary disclosure is an excellent example of industry working proactively with government to help ensure the safe and effective development of this clean burning source of energy.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the minister is looking into the state of scientific knowledge and has requested an in-house work plan. The question that remains is whether regulations are forthcoming on hydraulic fracturation.

I do not agree with the position of the government that jurisdiction is solely within the provinces, especially when we consider the possible impacts on drinking water, on the navigable waters act, on the Fisheries Act, and the possible impacts on first nations.

Are regulations on fracking forthcoming?

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, as I have already indicated to the member opposite, Environment Canada has initiated two examinations into the environmental impact of shale gas fracturing.

One study will be conducted by an independent panel of experts, while a further in-house study examining shale gas development will be undertaken within Environment Canada.

Our government is strongly committed to supporting clean energy initiatives to protect our environment and improve the quality of the air that we as Canadians breathe.

We are committed to the safe, responsible and sustainable development of Canada's natural resources, to securing Canada's position as a global clean energy superpower, and to ensuring economic growth occurs within a framework of environmental stewardship.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Papineau.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ST. ALBERT

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Rendezvous 2011 is the 150th anniversary celebration of the founding of St. Albert, the oldest non-fortified community in Alberta.

The Rendezvous 2011 committee has organized many events as part of the year-long celebration, beginning with a black tie gala dinner in January. There was a bilingual outdoor snow festival on Family Day, interpretive street performances, and a huge homecoming weekend. In August, 10,000 St. Albert residents met for a record-breaking picnic in the Sturgeon River Valley.

The festivities will continue throughout the remainder of this year and will conclude with a giant fireworks display on December 31.

These events have given the entire community the opportunity to cherish our past, honour our present and look forward to our future.

I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations and thanks to the Rendezvous 2011 organizing committee and its chair, Mrs. Margaret Plain, for all of their hard work and dedication in making the 150th-year-long anniversary such a great success.

I thank the hundreds of volunteers who have made this year-long celebration possible. Happy birthday. Great job, St. Albert.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to point out that today is the International Day of Peace. It is an opportunity not only to promote pacifist values, but also to oppose violence of any kind in armed conflicts.

Such violence affects millions of people around the world. It takes various forms, both physical and psychological. Unfortunately, all too often, women and children are the victims of violence in armed conflicts.

Thus, in solidarity with these women and children and all other victims of war, I invite all parliamentarians and all Canadians to reflect on what we can do for peace, for a better world.

* * *

[English]

PARLIAMENT HILL SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday the winners of the Bob Allen and Jean-Paul Lorrain Memorial Cup for the Parliament Hill Softball League were crowned.

The winning team, composed almost entirely of Hill staffers, played hard through a long season and embodied the twin goals of fitness and good sportsmanship with not a small touch of fun thrown in for good measure.

My apologies in advance but I salute the champions, known as the Hawntourage, for defeating the Ritz's Farm Team in a thrilling extra-innings game.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "When you play, play hard; when you work, don't play at all."

I would also like to salute all of our colleagues' staff who do so much work on our behalf, especially as we embark on what will be a very busy fall session in Parliament.

I am sure I speak for all of our colleagues when I say that I certainly could not do my job without Drew, Jordan and Branden here in Ottawa, and Averil, Oula and Linda in Edmonton.

May we all have a productive session and perhaps abide by my personal philosophy, "Work hard, play hard, but don't tear your sweater."

Statements by Members

Way to go team.

* * *

● (1405)

POINTE-CLAIRE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year the city of Pointe-Claire celebrates its 100th anniversary.

[Translation]

Pointe-Claire was originally an agricultural parish built around a windmill on the St. Lawrence River, and it helped spawn a handful of neighbouring municipalities that now form a large part of what is known as the West Island.

[English]

Good public administration under the leadership of mayors like Art Séguin, David Beck, Malcolm Knox and Bill McMurchie, combined with a commitment to excellence in sport and culture, are the hallmarks of this city of 30,000.

[Translation]

You can find everything in Pointe-Claire: a hospital, schools under two linguistic school boards, an excellent community centre, the first indoor Olympic-sized pool in Canada, a multi-sport artificial turf field, as well as the National Field of Honour, a veterans' cemetery.

[English]

Pointe-Claire is called home by Olympic diving medallist Anne Montminy, internationally renowned violinist Chantal Juillet, former CBC hockey broadcaster Dick Irvin, Canadiens' great Elmer Lach, and Juno award-winning musician Sam Roberts.

I ask all members to join me in wishing Pointe-Claire a very special happy birthday.

* * *

NATIONAL TREE DAY

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six months ago the House proclaimed National Tree Day.

[Translation]

That day has arrived.

[English]

We have a worldwide reputation for our wildlife, clean air and beautiful communities. For that, we should thank trees.

[Translation]

We all have a role to play in planting, growing and protecting trees.

[English]

However, there are leaders like Tree Canada that work tirelessly to improve our communities with more trees.

[Translation]

In the past 20 years, they have planted 77 million trees and have supported countless urban forest programs, and they are not alone.

[English]

I urge all Canadians to take time today to plant, to care for and to thank a tree for all they do to improve our lives.

I invite all members to join me at four o'clock today at the Canadian Museum of Nature to plant a sugar maple in symbolic reverence for all the mighty power of trees in our lives.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague mentioned, the International Day of Peace is an important event. Members of my own family had to leave their country because of war. This day was created by resolution 36/67 of the United Nations General Assembly.

This year, we are celebrating its 30th anniversary, and the theme is "Peace and Democracy: Make your voice heard!". It is important to promote the desire for peace and the security of people.

[English]

On this International Day of Peace, on behalf of all of the victims of war, and of those who are advocating peace and especially on behalf of future generations, I wish to convey a message that has resonated loudly in a hotel room in Montreal: "All we are saying, is give peace a chance".

* * *

PRINCE GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prince George Chamber of Commerce celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. The chamber began as the Board of Trade on September 17, 1911.

What began as a group of businessmen focused on the building of the foundation of their city has blossomed into an organization of more than 800 diverse Prince George businesses speaking with a single voice on issues that affect them locally.

To celebrate, on September 22, the Prince George Chamber of Commerce is having an open house and then on November 4, a formal centennial event.

Very few things last as long as 100 years in this day and age, so I congratulate the Prince George Chamber of Commerce which has shown in spades that excellent service and longevity go hand in hand.

* * *

ARMENIA

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Canadians of Armenian descent on this 20th anniversary of the independence of the Armenian Republic.

I am honoured to serve as chair of the Canada Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group. I have enjoyed the opportunity to dialogue with Armenian Canadians in my riding, here on the Hill and across Canada.

While visiting Armenia, I was fascinated both by how far it has come in 20 short years of freedom and how young its democratic traditions are. Even the largest cities like Yerevan are a model of peace, cleanliness and safety.

All members of the House are here as the result of the peaceful democratic process governed by the rule of law. Too often we take this for granted. Today I invite all hon. members to join me in congratulating our Armenian Canadian friends and our colleagues serving in the Azgayin Zhoghov on 20 years of independence, 20 years of democracy and 20 years of progress.

Shnorhavor. Shnorhagallem.

* * *

● (1410)

SENIORS' POVERTY

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council released a report on September 16, entitled, "A Profile of Vulnerable Seniors".

This report shows that the poverty rate for Hamilton seniors is now at 17%, which is nearly three times the national average of 5.9%. The single most important factor contributing to this poverty is of course inadequate income.

A single senior who relies solely on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement still lives well below the poverty line. Worse still, the poverty rate for senior women in Hamilton is 22%, which is twice the average for senior men.

To address this problem, the report's lead researcher believes that the Canada pension plan should be increased and I could not agree more.

The government also needs to implement the NDP proposal to increase the guaranteed income supplement beyond the meagre \$50 a month offered by the Minister of Finance. We know that more needs to be done for seniors to eliminate poverty. The only thing lacking is the political will of the government.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Peace. This year's theme is "Peace and Democracy: make your voice heard".

We believe that peace and democracy are bound firmly together. It is evident that in tandem they form an atmosphere that promotes prosperity for all.

As it is clearly entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, democracy supports an environment for a host of political rights and civil liberties.

[Translation]

On this International Day of Peace, there are many opportunities to take part in democratic activities. For example, District 5550 of Rotary International in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario is participating in discussions on human equality and discrimination.

Statements by Members

Today we join together with those who benefit freely from democracy and peace. We also join together with those who do not enjoy these freedoms. Our government, now and forever, will work to promote the Canadian and international values of peace and democracy.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week the Walk 4 Justice arrived in Ottawa after marching from Victoria to demand justice for missing and murdered Canadian aboriginal women. Sisters in Spirit has documented nearly 600 cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women, some 30 of which occurred as the march progressed across Canada.

New Democrats support calls by Amnesty International, KAIROS, Sisters in Spirit and the Native Women's Association of Canada for a plan of action that must include: a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women; support for women's shelters and support services; and equal access for aboriginal women to housing, education and employment.

These daughters, mothers, aunts or sisters are loved and deserve to be valued. We must act now to ensure our aboriginal sisters are spared further violence and injustice.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic position remains one of the world's best. However, the economic recovery is uncertain and remains fragile and too many Canadians remain out of work.

Instead of supporting Canadian jobs and growth, the NDP finance critic chooses to fearmonger about a hypothetical recession as if the NDP is cheering for Canada to fail. Our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic health.

The IMF praises Canada for our "relatively healthy economic fundamentals" and our "sounder fiscal and financial position". While these are encouraging signs, Canada is not immune to the economic turbulence facing the global economy, especially Europe and the United States.

That is why we need to stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan with measures like the hiring credit for small businesses. The last thing Canada's economy needs now is the NDP's massive tax hikes that would kill jobs and set Canadian families back.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

WORLD CARFREE DAY

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, September 22, is World Carfree Day. In Quebec, organizations such as the Association des Centres de gestion des déplacements du Québec, Voyagez futé Montréal, Développement économique Saint-Laurent and Mobiligo have organized a carfree challenge to create awareness among Quebecers about the benefits of available sustainable transportation options, to invite people who have never used sustainable transportation to try it, to encourage the public to use sustainable transportation more often and to encourage pedestrians and cyclists.

As the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, I am proud to be participating in and supporting this initiative, and I invite my constituents and all Canadians to visit www.defisansauto.com and take the challenge by leaving their car at home. Together we can build a better future.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, it was wonderful to learn that, according to a recent *Newsweek* survey, Canada is the third best country in the world in which to be a woman. Canada earned a full 100 points on the justice indicator and scored in the 90s on indicators such as health, education and economics.

This should come as no surprise. Our government has invested a lot of time and money across the country on issues important to women. We have increased our funding for women to its highest level ever. We are working hard with Canadians to end the abuse of women and girls.

Women can count on our government to pursue measures that create jobs and growth, support seniors, protect our health care system and fight against crime, while working to reduce and eliminate the deficit. More groups than ever are getting involved because our practical approach works.

* * *

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Alzheimer's Day, a day to acknowledge a disease that affects more than 24 million people worldwide. It is a debilitating disorder that has a significant impact, not only on those who suffer from Alzheimer's but also their families.

Today is a day of hope and awareness. Hope in knowing that people are working hard to bring a better quality of life to persons with Alzheimer's and to one day find a cure. Also, awareness that those suffering and their families need our compassion and our help. What is needed is a comprehensive plan that will address the reality of our growing seniors population and we need to develop the

capacity to handle the increased numbers of seniors suffering from this disease.

I thank all those Canadians who support and care for people who suffer from Alzheimer's. Their sacrifices and dedication are truly heroic and they deserve to be recognized.

* * *

SIR ROBERT BORDEN

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, 100 is not just associated with Nova Scotian Sir Robert Borden because his image graces the front of the \$100 bill. Today is the centennial anniversary of the Conservative Party's 1911 general election victory, a victory that saw us form government for the first time in 15 years.

Prime Minister Borden led Canada through the great war. It is said that it was on the battlefields of Europe that Canada came to age as a country. It was for those efforts that Sir Robert Borden fought with British Prime Minister Lloyd George to ensure that Canada would be a signatory at the Peace of Versailles, which was a very important step in Canada emerging as a key player in the Commonwealth.

Prime Minister Meighen said it best, when describing this proud Nova Scotian prime minister, when he said that Sir Robert served Canada well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister says that we are okay because we are not doing as badly as the others. That is not good enough.

This week's dismal report of the Canadian economy by the IMF should be a wake-up call. How can the Conservatives pretend the IMF report was good news? How can they brag about doing well when between 1.5 and 2 million Canadians are out of work?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Because it is true, Mr. Speaker. Canada is doing relatively well. That is what the IMF said yesterday.

We have the best fiscal position in the G7. We have the lowest total government net debt to GDP ratio in the G7. We have the best growth in the G7. We have the best banking system in the world. Canada is the best place to invest and do business in the next five years according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. We have the best job creation in the G7 since the recession.

All of this is true, and that is why we are doing relatively well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' policies have widened the gap between the rich and the middle class. The poverty level is rising. The unemployment rate is rising. The minister can play with the numbers, but the truth is that, in order for Canada to achieve the same level of employment that we had before the recession in 2008, we need 420,000 more jobs. That is the reality.

Why is the minister pleased to see that 2 million Canadians are out of work?

• (1420)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we had and still have a very successful economic action plan. A total of 600,000 net new jobs have been created in Canada since the recession began. We are still in the process of implementing our budget, including an upcoming hiring credit for SMEs. As my colleague, the Minister of Finance, was saying, we see here that we have the lowest net debt to GDP ratio. We also have the best growth in the G7. Canada is the best place to invest in the next five years. These are results and that is what Canadians expect. Thanks to the good work of the Minister of Finance, we are on the right track.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to open his eyes.

Scotiabank is saying that we are on the verge of a recession. Moody's is saying that households are carrying too much debt. The IMF revised Canada's economic outlook downward. It is not the NDP that is saying these things. It is his friends. Inflation is way up, which will hurt the poor and the middle class and slow the economy down even further.

Is the minister aware of this?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. What is this report saying? It is saying that, over the next two years, we will have the best economic growth in the G7 and will be the best place to invest. That says something for all the jobs that were created here. On the other hand, the NDP is proposing plans to increase taxes by \$10 billion a year. That would kill the economy. It would be an economic fiasco. That is not what we are going to do.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, job creation is not the same thing as growth in the labour force. It is far from encouraging for the families of the 2 million Canadians who are unemployed, underemployed or downright discouraged. The rising price of gas and groceries is putting additional pressure on Canadian families' budgets.

The Conservatives are very generous with the oil companies, but why are they not doing more for Canadian families?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the facts. The oil companies pay the same taxes as other Canadian businesses pay. It is high time that suggestions to the contrary are stopped because they are not accurate.

I know the member opposite wants to try to be accurate when she talks about tax matters in Canada and accurate, of course, about the

Oral Questions

NDP plan which that party advanced to the people of Canada in the last election to raise taxes by about \$10 billion per year on businesses, which, we all know, will be passed along to individuals as part of the cost of doing business. That proposal by the NDP is inflationary for Canadian families.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the best antidote to household debt is a good job. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are doing almost nothing for the two million Canadians who need one.

The government persists with its generous tax breaks for highly profitable oil companies, and yet takes a wait-and-see attitude toward creating jobs for the employed or getting the economy going again.

Canadians want action on jobs now. Why will the finance minister not act?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member opposite knows, our unemployment rate is too high, but it is much better than that in the United States, and that has not happened in more than a generation.

The economic action plan actually is working and continues to work. We have about 600,000 net new jobs in Canada today since the end of the recession. We have the strongest job growth in the advanced economies in the world.

All of that is true. Should we do more? Yes, and we are with the accelerated capital cost allowance; the new tax credit for small businesses, more than 500,000 of them, to hire people; the continuation of our tax reductions, just the opposite of what the NDP proposes, which is to raise taxes again.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a review of public accounts shows that the government spending on professional and special services, including the use of consultants, has gone up from \$7.24 billion to well over \$10 billion, a cumulative increase of over \$7 billion.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance what he thinks the chances are that the \$20 million consultants he just hired will come back and say, "Do you know what is a good way to save money? Cut the use of consultants".

• (1425)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the member opposite from Rosedale was very fond of big government during his days in Ontario: big government, big deficits, big debt. It was so bad he hung on until almost the last day because he knew the people of Ontario were going to throw him out of office because of his big deficits, big debt and accumulated public debt.

Yes, we are having experts from outside look at government spending. Yes, we should. Government should not be the sole judge of the way it is run. We need advice from the outside.

Oral Questions

For every dollar spent—

The Speaker: I am not sure how the hon. member for Toronto Centre heard the minister's answer because there was quite a lot of noise. I would ask all hon. colleagues to listen to the answers.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

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CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): I think most of the noise was coming from the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the minister could now explain—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. I know it is a Wednesday, but we will have to listen to the question before we can listen to the answer.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Bob Rae: I did not know knuckle grazing could cause so much noise, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the minister could tell us, in negotiating with respect to perimeter security, why, when faced with the buy American problem, why, when faced with the labelling problem, would ending trade discrimination not be a part and parcel of those negotiations?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on reducing barriers to trade, not raising new barriers, as some parties in the House have suggested.

Sixty per cent of our GDP is comprised of trade. One in five Canadian jobs is directly or indirectly related to trade, so any suggestion that we should be adding to the barriers that face our businesses is absolutely wrong.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister misunderstood the question I asked. Being a charitable man, I will repeat the question in my second language.

What I am trying to say is very simple. At a time when we are facing a real risk of discrimination against the Canadian economy with regard to our exports to the United States, why not make this issue of discrimination part of our negotiations with the Americans on security?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the member listened to my answer. Had he been listening to the Prime Minister two days ago, he would know that the Prime Minister was very clear. The border vision initiatives are about deepening and strengthening the world's greatest trade relationship. Given our strong and mature relationship with the United States, we can separately address our concerns regarding the buy American provisions. This government will stand up for ordinary, hard-working citizens. Why will those members not?

SERVICE CANADA

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are outraged that the government is spending \$90,000 a day for a consultant to help plan cuts to services that Canadians rely on. If we add it up, we could keep 230 front-line employees on the job for over a year.

Why is the government throwing money at high-priced consultants while cutting staff who actually deliver services to Canadians?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know this would be contrary to NDP ideology, but there actually is some waste in government. Governments can actually reduce their expenses. We should not do it ourselves solely. We should get advice and expertise from the private sector. For every \$1 of spending on experts, we expect \$200 of savings, which is a pretty good deal.

● (1430)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the International Monetary Fund has reversed its predictions about Canada's economy, and is now warning that our unemployment rate is just going to keep climbing. While Canadians worry about the economy, Conservatives are throwing \$90,000 a day at high-priced consultants, planning even deeper cuts. The minister is turning his back on communities that depend on these positions. When will Conservatives focus on Canadian families instead of throwing money at high-priced consultants?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are focused as a top priority on jobs and the economy. The record on jobs is about 600,000 net new jobs as a result of the economic action plan.

Let us see what the IMF actually said. Here is what the spokesman said just yesterday: "Canada is actually matching up quite well on a relative basis...growth rates are 2%, the recession was not too deep, they haven't had a financial crisis to the extent that the U.S. has had or the Europeans are having it. And so, all in all, Canada is actually doing quite well."

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are spending \$90,000 a day for a high-priced outside consultant to plan service cuts. These cuts will have a direct and negative impact on Canadians, especially in rural regions. Seniors without Internet access and with limited access to public transit are being left behind by the government.

When will the government realize that paying private contractors top dollar to do its dirty work while short-changing seniors is certainly not the change Canadians were looking for?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deficit reduction action plan is necessary as we move on the fiscal track to balanced budgets. The member opposite should know that there is some waste in government, that it is possible to review programs, that not every program should go on forever, that sometimes there are new programs, sometimes there are programs that have completed their usefulness.

Certainly, it is the obligation of government to get the best advice we can, including the advice we will get from outside consultants. As I said, for every \$1 spent on experts, we expect \$200 of savings.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our seniors deserve better.

By significantly reducing the services offered at Service Canada centres, the Conservative government is showing no consideration whatsoever for our seniors. Apparently, according to the minister, anyone who cannot communicate with Service Canada over the Internet is unworthy of the 21st century. That is unacceptable.

Can the minister tell us here today how the cuts to Service Canada will better serve our seniors?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to modernize our employment insurance system, especially the processing of claims. At this time, processing is done mainly on paper. This is not working. With an automated system, Service Canada employees will have more time to help seniors, and this will be more affordable for seniors. We promised Canadians that we would respect their money and that is what we are doing.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of spending \$90,000 a day on learning how to cut public services, the government should put more resources into investigating how the Canada Revenue Agency bureaucrats were able to help a convicted fraudster escape paying taxes.

Money laundering, \$12 million in cash spent in casinos, and CRA private documents found in his safe in a building belonging to a mobster; after these troubling allegations, can the government explain what is going on at the Canada Revenue Agency?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to clarify that many of these allegations date back more than a decade. They are not new allegations. CRA officials are working with the RCMP and the investigation is ongoing.

We do appreciate that this is a very serious issue and we will not tolerate these types of activities as they are alleged.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the government is so determined to make cuts, then perhaps it could cut off fraudsters instead of cutting services to honest citizens.

Canadians work hard for their money. We cannot blame them for being worried when they see how badly public funds are being managed. We have to shed light on what is happening at the Canada Revenue Agency.

Can the government assure us that it will get to the bottom of things and investigate these serious allegations?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and the House that the RCMP is investigating this matter. It is a very serious matter. CRA officials are working with the RCMP and we will get to the bottom of the issue.

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G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while senior bureaucrats in the Summit Management Office, Infrastructure Canada and Industry Canada categorically told the Auditor General they had no direct involvement in the G8 legacy fund, we know that is not true. Either they were misrepresenting the facts, or perhaps they were simply moved beyond the reach of the Auditor General.

Here are simple questions for the President of the Treasury Board. Did the bureaucrats who participated in the secret meetings in Muskoka not have an obligation to come clean with the Auditor General? Were any of these key players later promoted, for example, Mr. Sanjeev Chowdhury, for keeping to this code of silence?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not correct. As I said yesterday, the facts have not changed. The Auditor General has made some observations with respect to the administration of this program and has given us some pointers.

We must not forget about the good news coming out of this. The good news is that every dollar is accounted for. All 32 projects came in on or under budget. And guess what? The project itself was under \$5 million.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, diverting \$50 million from border infrastructure to build outhouses in Muskoka is not a simple thing to pull off. The President of the Treasury Board has been sitting down for weeks refusing to explain how he pulled it off. Again, I would like to ask him a couple of simple questions so we can get to the bottom of this.

Is it not true that he went to local mayors and said that he personally would set up the meeting with the Prime Minister to make the money flow? Would the minister also confirm that he told mayors that for other pet projects that were outside the Muskoka slush fund he would guarantee they got the money?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, that is incorrect, but let me talk about the good news on this infrastructure funding.

Oral Questions

This infrastructure funding was recommended by the municipalities. It enhanced the municipalities' infrastructure program. I will tell members what infrastructure programs the money was spent on: rehabilitation of the airport in North Bay, fixing up the provincial highway, and building a community centre that was used during the summer. What is wrong with that picture?

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G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at last year's G20 meeting, my city was shut down. It was shaken. It was vandalized. A year later the government will still not pick up the tab. Gazebos, yes, but Toronto business owners with smashed windows is another story.

If it is not pork-barrelling, why will the government not reimburse Toronto businesses? When will it fix the deeply flawed summit management protocol so that the next time small businesses will not get hung out to dry?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the losses and damages to Toronto businesses are regrettable. The claims process is an independent process that has been in place since the previous government in 2001 and has been used successfully at previous summits. Following this review, Toronto businesses were treated the same as those affected at summits and Quebec City and Kananaskis.

This government is committed to providing a fair share to Toronto businesses.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot put up with this Conservative government's waste and mismanagement. It is wasting \$90,000 a day to have consultants tell it where to cut government spending.

Why can the cabinet ministers not make these decisions themselves? What exactly are Canadians paying these ministers to do?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not share the view that the member opposite clearly has that governments are the font of all wisdom and all knowledge and that governments should just examine themselves and come to their own conclusions without getting advice that is available in the private sector in Canada, very good advice. Therefore, yes, we are seeking that advice. For every \$1 of spending on experts, we expect \$200 of savings.

● (1440)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, spending on consultants is up by \$3 billion per year.

I served on the cabinet expenditure review committee led by the member for Markham—Unionville. As ministers, we took our jobs seriously. We went through every spending item line by line and we made the decisions.

Why do the Conservatives outsource their thinking? Is it because the Prime Minister trusts consultants more than his own ministers? What exactly are Canadians paying those ministers to do if not to make decisions about the expenditures of government?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as if the leader of the Liberal Party then and the NDP did not do enough damage to Ontario between 1990 and 1995, now we have the member from the third party here saying that the Liberals did a good job on deficit reduction through their work. Sure, they did. They reduced funding for hospitals. They reduced funding for teachers, for education. They reduced funding for nurses in the province of Ontario. This is shameful.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world looks to Canada when it comes to the vital research that is done by the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre. Despite the minister's denial, the Conservative government is once again turning its back on scientific research.

Will the minister admit that the person who is in charge of this program is losing his job and his government is effectively terminating this program?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the assumption of my hon. colleague is absolutely false. We are not ending any of our ozone monitoring services or closing down the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre. We are—

Hon. Ralph Goodale: You're firing the guy.

Hon. Peter Kent: No, we are optimizing and streamlining the way we monitor and we measure ozone to operate more effectively. That is what we were elected to do.

The Speaker: There is far too much noise at the far end of the chamber. I am going to ask all hon. colleagues to listen to the responses. We will have a little order.

The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the omnibus crime bill was tabled in the House. It—

Mr. David Anderson: Say thank you.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Conservatives are in complete denial over there about the serious financial consequences this is going to have to the budgetary process in our country, both provincially and federally. For instance, a single part of the bill will create several thousand plus additional people going into jail that we are going to have to pay for. We all deplore the cost of crime, but we have to have budgetary transparency.

When will one of the two ministers stand in the House and tell us what this bill is going to cost Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that the hon. member has now become a fiscal conservative. He is worried about government expenditures. This certainly is something new.

If he is worried, I can assure him that most of the cost of crime is borne by victims. A study in 2008 said that the cost of crime in the country was \$99 billion, 83% was borne by victims of crime.

Why do those members not stand up for victims of crime for a change? Why not make that a priority?

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all the minister and the government are going to do is dump more costs on to that \$99 billion figure, which is really questionable.

[Translation]

It is unacceptable that the government is refusing to disclose these costs. This bill will transfer the financial responsibilities to the provinces, which are already short on resources. The provinces are asking for help, but the government is refusing to listen to them.

Can the minister tell us how much this bill is going to cost the provinces? How much?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for the hon. member. Provinces right across the country have been supportive of these government initiatives. I can also tell him that just in the last budget an increase of more than \$2.4 billion was given to the provinces.

If that individual wants to get on board with this, he should start standing up for victims, people who are the victims of sexual exploitation, do something about drug trafficking in the country and get behind this bill and support it right now.

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, the NDP fought to stop the Conservatives from passing legislation allowing police officers to spy on citizens on the Internet without a warrant. Since this measure is not included in the omnibus crime bill, it is a victory for the NDP and all Canadians.

Can the government confirm that it will, once and for all, heed the experts and the vast majority of the population, who are opposed to surveillance without a warrant?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, outrageous claims like that one, that private communications will be intercepted without a warrant, are a complete fabrication. Our proposed approach of linking an Internet address to subscriber information is on par with the phone book linking phone numbers to an address. What this will not allow for is access to private communications without a warrant.

Oral Questions

Our message is clear. If someone wants to commit a crime, we will ensure that laws are in place to ensure that individual is apprehended, and those laws will be done in an appropriate lawful manner.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even former Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day was opposed to electronic surveillance without a warrant.

Can the minister confirm that his government is admitting that this surveillance initiative, an even greater intrusion into the lives of Canadians, has been abandoned? Can he guarantee today that it has been abandoned once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand where the member is getting his information from. This type of outrageous claim that lawful access would not be appropriately enacted by our government is simply that, outrageous.

The legislation will come. It will provide for appropriate judicial oversight in respect of access to private conversations.

Rather than repeating fabrications, the member might want to come and talk to me about what we are actually planning.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has become the envy of the world when it comes to our economic position. Just yesterday a senior International Monetary Fund official said of our economy “all in all Canada is doing quite well”.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister please update the House on what the Prime Minister is doing today in support of Canada's economic position while at the United Nations for international meetings?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister held a round table at the New York Stock Exchange with leading executives from global financial firms to discuss the current economic situation as well as trade and investment between Canada and the United States.

As members know, our government's top priority remains completing the economic recovery, and that is our Prime Minister's top priority as well.

Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to stay focused on what matters, creating jobs and economic growth. That is what our Prime Minister does each and every day. That is what he was doing today in New York.

*Oral Questions***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how many ways are the Conservatives going to fail aboriginal people?

It has been three years since the Prime Minister apologized for the residential school system, yet many of the most vulnerable survivors, such as the homeless, may not be compensated. The application deadline has passed and Conservatives are doing nothing to reach out to those being left behind.

What will the government do to ensure all residential school survivors are fairly compensated?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to ensuring that victims from this dark chapter in our history are fairly compensated. We have conducted a grassroots outreach strategy implemented by the Assembly of First Nations and other aboriginal organizations. We did this in 16 aboriginal languages, English and French. This overall outreach strategy was developed by all parties to the settlement and approved by the courts. It has been deemed highly effective by the courts and all the parties to the agreement. The outreach is ongoing.

• (1450)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, National Chief Shawn Atleo has told us aboriginal high school students are more likely to be incarcerated than to graduate. Aboriginal women make up a whopping one-third of women in custody.

Anyone who commits a crime must face justice, but is it not equally important to prevent involvement in criminal activities, in the first place? Instead of building more jails, why will the government not invest in better education and job creation for aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made major investments in education and in other developments to a degree that no other government has ever done. We have, right now, a national panel going across the country on K to 12 education. We did that in collaboration. The Assembly of First Nations, the National Chief and myself appointed the panel. It is working quite independently. This is a major development with positive outcomes. This is the right way to go, and we are making those kinds of investments.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Walk 4 Justice gathered on Parliament Hill, asking for answers about the hundreds of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada.

Back in February, Conservatives refused to renew funding they promised for Sisters in Spirit. This project tracked cases and gave a voice to communities facing this violence, yet Conservatives have severely hindered this groundbreaking initiative.

Why is the government shutting out the voices of the families and the affected communities?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. Through our national strategy to

deal with this very difficult issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women, we have a community, a fund component that we are working very closely with community organizations in aboriginal communities across the country. I can list one of them. I have dozens here that I could use as examples. For instance, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke is providing information sessions that will enhance knowledge and access to justice for victims of family violence.

The community organizations are from aboriginal communities and are working closely with the Public Safety, Justice and Status of Women departments to ensure we get them the help that they need.

[Translation]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for a government that claims to be the champion of law and order, the Conservatives' attitude towards violence against aboriginal women is hard to understand. In the last three months, Walk4Justice has had to add 37 names to its list of missing women. Federal resources are needed to protect these victims who have no voice.

How can communities provide support to the families of the victims without the assistance of this government?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, funding is important. Just to put it into perspective, just one organization, the Native Women's Association of Canada, has received almost \$20 million from our government alone.

However, what I think is most important is that now we are working with law enforcement agencies across the country, including the RCMP's new missing persons' centre. We have created a public website for tips from the public to help find missing and murdered aboriginal women. We have enhanced our databases for all law enforcement agencies across the country. However, more important, we are working with women's aboriginal organizations at the community level to help support them.

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SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Finance wags his finger at small business in Canada and tells them to hire more people, the minister from Service Canada is heading them out the door in droves.

We know it is not just the job losses; it is the services that are going to be lost to those who lose their jobs in this country. Right now it is taking five to six weeks to complete an EI claim. We know that with fewer workers we will see longer tie-ups, and these are people who are most vulnerable, most in need in this country.

Oral Questions

When will the minister stop this ridiculous scheme and stop the cuts in Service Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the recent recession we did take on some people to make sure that Canadians who have lost their jobs receive their first payment in a timely manner. We increased the standards. We increased the speed with which we provided those first payments, I am pleased to say, but those people were hired on a temporary basis. They were hired only to process EI claims.

Fortunately, thanks to our economic action plan, more Canadians are at work now than ever before, so there is not the same need to hire people to process the claims.

The individuals knew that they were temporary jobs, but service standards have improved compared to the 10 weeks it took when the Liberals were in power.

• (1455)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely asinine. The minister says the back-end workers are the only thing that is being changed. Service Canada workers know what she is doing to their back end.

I will tell the House what makes no sense: keeping centres in areas that have low records of unemployment. In Kitchener and Halifax, it is about 6%; in Edmonton it is at 5.5%, and Laval is under 5%, but they are ripping jobs out of Gander, where it is 17.5%, and Glace Bay, where it is 16%.

Of all the dumb, mean-spirited, ludicrous ideas, this—

The Speaker: Order, please. I see the hon. minister is rising to answer.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current EI system is essentially paper based. We want to bring the system into the 21st century by automating applications for EI and the processing of them. That will honour our commitment to Canadians to provide more efficient, more effective service to them. It will keep their taxes down, and we are going to make sure that we maintain the front-line standards of delivery. These changes are taking place in the backroom. Front-line service will not be changed.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Monday once again, the Minister of the Environment said that the department could lose hundreds of scientists without any effect on basic services. But this government has cut 43% of the budget of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

If assessing and reducing industrial impacts on our environment are not considered basic services, then what is?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is well aware that the environment is a priority for the Government of Canada during these times of fiscal restraint.

[English]

I can assure her that budget 2011, while it did reassign some resources, can cover without compromising any of the programs of my department.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday and then again today, the Minister claimed that the crucial ozone data centre is not closing, but the only employee who runs the centre has actually already received notice of potential layoff. If the minister thinks that the centre can run all by itself, I suggest that maybe he agree to optimizing and streamlining his own office. It might make it a little harder to optimize and streamline the truth.

I asked on Monday, I asked on Tuesday, and I am going to ask again today: can the minister show us evidence of the impacts of these cuts?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can again say there is a great difference between letters to employees of Environment Canada advising them that they may be affected by workforce adjustment and separation from the department. It is entirely possible that all of the positions will be accommodated through attrition. The proof will be in the pudding as we continue to deliver the services for cleaner air and for protecting our great public spaces for the good of the people of Canada.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a recent survey conducted by the American news outlet *Newsweek*, Canada was ranked among the top three best places in the world to be a woman. Canada was ranked a world leader on the key indicators of justice, health, education, economics and political involvement.

Can the Minister for Status of Women tell this House what the government is doing to make Canada an even better place for women and the girls who will follow in their footsteps?

• (1500)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Miramichi for her tireless work for women.

Our government has increased funding for women to its highest level ever, and we are working hard with women across the country to ensure they achieve their full potential. Women can count on our government to pursue measures that create jobs and growth, to end elder abuse, to protect our health care system, and of course to end violence against women and girls.

Oral Questions

We are very proud that Canada is ranked third-best place to be a woman in the world, third only to Iceland and Sweden.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has asked the government several times to introduce a bill to clarify the responsibilities of Air Canada and its affiliates with regard to providing services in French and English. In May 2010, 252 hon. members unanimously called on the government to do the same. The minister's two immediate predecessors promised to do so, but did not.

Will the Minister of Transport keep his government's promise or will he follow the other two and prove the old saying, "Bad things come in threes"?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, Air Canada is responsible for meeting its official language requirements with its partner companies. We are ensuring that the official languages are respected and we will continue to do so.

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[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prince Edward Island provincial nominee program has raised alarm bells for Islanders and all Canadians.

Recently three government workers have come forward with allegations of bribery and fraud within this program. These total over \$400 million, apparently in violation of the rules, with no accountability but with political interference.

Islanders and all Canadians deserve to know the truth. Will the government conduct an inquiry into the disturbing allegations staining this federal program?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are new allegations and they were recently provided to officials at the ministry. Those allegations have been provided to the RCMP. To be fair, because they are under investigation, it would not be fair for the government to comment further.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has invested more in science and technology than any other government in Canadian history. When it comes to supporting basic discovery-oriented university research, Canada is ranked number one among the G7 countries. Our government's commitment to science and technology is paying dividends.

Can the Minister of State for Science and Technology please update the House on how our government has helped to bring a world-leading facility to Canada and to my riding?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for joining me at the grand opening of the Stephen Hawking Centre at the Perimeter Institute just recently.

This brand new federally funded facility will make the Perimeter Institute the largest theoretical physics research and academic organization the world.

This year we have invested more in the Perimeter Institute, showing our government's ongoing commitment to building a stronger economy, creating those job opportunities of the future and improving the standard of living for all Canadians through science and technology.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER'S DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has demonstrated his lack of respect for francophones across the country by hiring a director of communications who has insulted francophones.

It is impossible to work with the Prime Minister unless you have more respect for the two official languages. This choice speaks volumes about what the Conservatives think about Quebec, Acadia and francophones elsewhere in Canada.

When will the Conservatives admit they were wrong and replace Mr. Persichilli?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that with this new Parliament we would be above such unfounded allegations. We know that the Prime Minister has distanced himself from Mr. Persichilli's remarks.

Instead of impugning motives, I will state the facts. We resolved the fiscal imbalance, we gave Quebec a seat at UNESCO and we recognized the Quebec nation. Quebec's jurisdictions have never been so well respected, after 13 years of denial by the Liberals and now an opposition party that wants to centralize everything—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment.

Years ago, it was my great privilege to be part of the Canadian negotiating team for the Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer. My question follows those of other colleagues.

We have heard today in the House that the minister says we will streamline and optimize our ozone measurements. I hear from academics around Canada that we will streamline our ozone measurements program right out of existence.

I would like to ask the hon. minister to make it very clear for us to reassure everyone, to withdraw the letters threatening the jobs of the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Centre program manager, the ozone sonde program and the international—

The Speaker: Order, please. I will have to stop the hon. member there to give the minister a chance to respond. The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her efforts in the past in working on the Montreal Protocol, but I can assure her that we are not cutting any ozone monitoring services or closing the centre.

Yes, we are optimizing and streamlining the way we collect data to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent in the most prudent but still environmentally correct way. That is what we were elected to do.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask for unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Minister of Immigration should halt the deportation of Paola Ortiz from Canada for humanitarian reasons.

I seek unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations in relation to section 19 of the Statutory Instruments Act.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this report later today.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PURPLE DAY ACT

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-278, An Act respecting a day to increase public awareness about epilepsy.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill would declare March 26 Purple Day in recognition of epilepsy awareness.

Purple Day was founded in 2008 by Cassidy Megan who lives in my riding of Halifax West. At the time she was only nine years old. Her objective was to let other children with epilepsy know that they were not alone.

Purple Day is a grassroots effort dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy worldwide. Thanks to the leadership and dedication of Cassidy and Epilepsy Nova Scotia, Purple Day is now celebrated in more than 35 countries.

As in previous years, on March 26, people around the globe, including members of this House, wore purple to spread the word about epilepsy which affects over 50 million people worldwide. That is more than multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's disease combined.

Greater understanding of this disease will help educate people about what to do when someone is having a seizure and will help give epileptics more safety and support.

The bill would enshrine March 26 in law as the date each year when we Canadians wear purple to raise awareness of epilepsy.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1510)

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-279, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a reintroduction of the bill that passed this House before the last election but, unfortunately, not the Senate. There is an urgent need for this legislation to help end the discrimination, social exclusion and, all too often, violence that face transgender Canadians.

I hope to work with members from all parties to ensure that this important bill becomes law. Let us take this step together so that all the Susans, Regans, Jordans, Daphnes, and all our other transgender friends and family members can take their rightful place in all aspects of Canadian life.

Routine Proceedings

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY (CCSVI) ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-280, An Act to establish a National Strategy for Chronic Cerebrospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI).

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill aims to establish a national strategy for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, CCSVI.

The bill calls for the minister to convene a conference with the provincial and territorial ministers of health to establish a national strategy, including: ensuring that proper health care is not refused to a person who is seeking or has obtained treatment for CCSVI outside Canada; identifying the most appropriate level of clinical trials for treatment of CCSVI to place Canada at the forefront of international research; estimating the funding necessary for clinical trials and tracking individuals who have received the treatment; establishing an advisory panel composed of experts who have been actively engaged in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, as well as an individual who has been treated; and ensuring that clinical trials begin by March 1, 2012.

I hope all hon. members will support this bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-281, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (discontinuance of listed sidings).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce another measure to better preserve producer car loading sites across western Canada. Located along railway sidings, these sites enable prairie grain producers to load their own railcars as an alternative to being forced to go through the grain-handling facilities of private elevator companies.

Down from over 700 such do-it-yourself loading sites some 10 years ago, fewer than 300 of these sites remain in existence today. The grain companies do not want farmers loading their own grain cars because, of course, they do not collect any tariffs on that grain and the railways have been trying to get rid of these sites. However, producers have actually been making greater use of their right to load their own railcars in recent years. The number of producer-loaded cars is up fourfold in the last decade, to nearly 12,000 cars per year.

The vast majority of prairie grain is handled through the conventional system but this is a right that was given to farmers to load their own cars over 100 years ago by the Supreme Court of Canada. It is enshrined in the Canada Grain Act but it is meaningless unless the sites exist for farmers to use. Right now, the railway can abandon those sites on 60 days' notice without any further due process.

This measure proposes to give three years' notice to ensure there will be a proper hearing, to put the onus on the railways to prove what they are doing is in the public interest, to provide other interested parties with an opportunity to buy and operate those sidings and to compensate municipalities when a siding is closed.

This is just decent behaviour in dealing with matters of this kind. I hope the measures contained in this private member's bill will commend themselves to all members of the House.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations, presented to this House earlier today, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is there consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1515)

[English]

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of introducing a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all across the country, more often than not in Quebec, calling upon the House of Commons to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known and, in fact, that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined. These signatories point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world and that the Government of Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities in which they live. They also call upon the government to end all subsidies of asbestos both in Canada and internationally, as well as to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to present a petition signed by 820 people in my riding of Red Deer, Alberta.

The petitioners urge the federal government to honour its commitment to the UN protocol by providing adequate funding to set up safe housing for the victims of human trafficking.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present this petition on behalf of many constituents throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The petition calls upon the government to dismantle the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' for wrongful decisions, certainly when it comes to the management of the current fish stocks off the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador and all of Atlantic Canada, for that matter. The petitioners request that the Government of Canada initiate a public inquiry into all aspects of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, also requiring that it place a model that takes into account fishery science with an emphasis on serving the fisher people who can make a living from that industry.

I humbly present this to the House on behalf of not only the fisher people of Newfoundland and Labrador but all stakeholders in the province.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to open debate on Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts.

The bill, which is known as the Safe Streets and Communities Act, fulfills the commitment in the June 2011 Speech from the Throne to quickly reintroduce law and order legislation to combat crime and terrorism. This commitment, in turn, reflects the strong mandate that Canadians have given us to protect society and to hold criminals accountable.

We have bundled together crime bills that died on the Order Paper in the last Parliament into a comprehensive piece of legislation and it is our plan to pass it within the first 100 sitting days of Parliament.

As I met with victims of crime and their families yesterday in Brampton, I was once again struck by the importance of having this legislation passed in a timely manner. Both in Brampton and in Montreal yesterday, people such as Joe Wambach, Sharon Rosenfeldt, Sheldon Kennedy, Yvonne Harvey, Gary Lindfield, Maureen Basnicki and Line Lacasse spoke about the need for these changes to our laws.

We have a duty to stand up for these victims, which we are doing by bringing in this legislation.

The objective of our criminal law reform agenda over the past few years has been to build a stronger, safer and better Canada. This comprehensive legislation is another important step in the process to achieve this end.

As I travelled across the country holding round tables or meeting people on the street, the message was clear. People want to ensure their streets and communities are safer and they are relying on us to take the steps needed to achieve this.

There are five parts to Bill C-10.

Part 1 includes reforms to deter terrorism by supporting victims of terrorism and amending the State Immunity Act.

Government Orders

Part 2 includes sentencing reforms that will target sexual offences against children and serious drug offences, as well as prevent the use of conditional sentences for serious violent and property crimes.

Part 3 includes post-sentencing reforms to increase offender accountability, eliminate pardons for serious crimes and strengthen the international transfer of offenders regime.

Part 4 includes reforms to better protect Canadians from violent young offenders.

Lastly, part 5 includes immigration reforms to better protect vulnerable foreign workers against abuse and exploitation, including through human trafficking.

Some may say that this comprehensive bill makes it difficult to understand. In response I would note that these reforms should be very familiar to members of Parliament, indeed all Canadians, given that these reforms were before the previous Parliament when they died on the Order Paper with the dissolution of that Parliament.

Many of these reforms have been previously debated, studied and even passed by at least one of the two chambers of Parliament. For the most part, the comprehensive legislation reintroduces these reforms in the same form they were in previously, with technical changes that were needed to be able to reintroduce them in this Parliament in one bill.

A few additional changes have been made and I will describe them as I provide a summary of the individual areas of reform. However, I want to note that these additional changes remain consistent with the government's objectives when these reforms were originally introduced in the previous Parliament and, therefore, should also be supported today.

I will now take hon. members through some of the elements of Bill C-10.

Part 1 is comprised of clauses 2 through 9. These amendments seek to deter terrorism by enacting the justice for victims of terrorism act.

As reflected in the proposed preamble to the new act, these reforms recognize that, "terrorism is a matter of national concern that affects the security of the nation", and that it is a "priority to deter and prevent acts of terrorism against Canada and Canadians".

As Canadians recently marked the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania, it was a stark reminder that the threat of terrorism remains and that we must continue to be vigilant.

• (1520)

Accordingly and with a view to deterring terrorism, part 1 proposes to create a cause of action for victims of terrorism to enable them to sue perpetrators and supporters of terrorism, including listed foreign states, for loss or damage that occurred as a result of an act of terrorism or omission committed anywhere in the world on or after January 1, 1985.

It also would amend the State Immunity Act to lift immunity of those states that the government has listed for support of terrorism.

Part 1's amendments were previously proposed and passed by the Senate in former Bill S-7, Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, in the previous session of Parliament. They include technical changes to correct grammatical and cross-reference errors.

Part 2 is comprised of clauses 10 through 51. It proposes sentencing amendments to the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to ensure that the sentences imposed for child sexual exploitation, serious drug offences, as well as for other serious violent and property crimes, adequately reflect the severity of these crimes.

The exploitation of children is a most serious crime, one that is incomprehensible and must be met with appropriate punishment. Bill C-10 proposals addressing child sexual exploitation were addressed in the previous bill. These reforms seek to consistently and adequately condemn all forms of child sexual abuse through the imposition of new and higher mandatory sentences of imprisonment, as well as some higher maximum penalties.

They also seek to prevent the commission of sexual offences against children through the creation of two new offences and by requiring courts to consider imposing conditions to prevent suspected or convicted child sex offenders from engaging in conduct that could facilitate or further their commission of sexual offences against children.

The bill's proposed reforms addressing child sexual exploitation are essentially the same as the bill we had in the previous Parliament, that was passed by the House of Commons and was before the Senate at third reading debate when it died on the Order Paper. Unfortunately, some members kept on talking so that the bill did not get passed.

The primary difference is that this bill also proposes to increase the maximum penalty for four offences, with a corresponding increase in their proposed mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment to better reflect the heinous nature of these offences.

The bill proposes to increase the maximum penalty on summary conviction for a number of offences. All of these are consistent with the objectives of the former Bill C-54 as originally introduced.

It also proposes Criminal Code reforms to further restrict the use of a conditional sentence, or house arrest as it is often called.

Government Orders

Originally proposed in Bill C-16, ending house arrest for property and other serious crimes by serious and violent offenders act in the previous Parliament, these proposals seek to make it explicitly clear that a conditional sentence is never available for: offences punishable by a maximum of 14 years or life; offences prosecuted by indictment and punishable by a maximum penalty of 10 years that result in bodily harm, involve the import-export, trafficking and production of drugs or involve the use of a weapon; or listed serious property and violent offences punishable by 10 years and prosecuted by indictment, such as criminal harassment, trafficking in persons and theft over \$5,000.

The bill's proposals are in the same form as previously proposed in Bill C-16 which had received second reading and had been referred to the justice committee but not yet studied when it died on the Order Paper.

It includes technical changes to the list of excluded offences punishable by a maximum of 10 years: to include the recently enacted new offence of motor vehicle theft; to coordinate the proposed imposition of a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment in section 172.1(1), luring a child; and to change the listed child abduction offence to section 281.

We are also addressing the serious issue of drug crimes in this country, particularly those involving organized crime and those that target youth because we all know the impact that such crimes have on our communities.

• (1525)

Part 2's proposals to address drug crime include amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to impose mandatory minimum sentences of imprisonment for the offences of production, trafficking or possession for the purposes of trafficking or importing, and exporting or possession for the purpose of exporting of schedule I drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine, and schedule II drugs, such as marijuana.

These mandatory minimum sentences would apply where there was an aggravating factor, including where the production of the drug constituted a potential security, health or safety hazard, or the offence was committed in or near a school.

As well, it would double the maximum penalty for the production of schedule II drugs, such as marijuana, from 7 to 14 years and it would reschedule GHB and flunitrazepam, most commonly known as the date rape drugs, from schedule III to schedule I.

As a result, these offences would now carry higher maximum penalties.

The bill would also allow a court to delay sentencing while the addicted offender completed a treatment program approved by the province under the supervision of the court or a drug treatment court approved program and to impose a penalty other than the minimum sentence if the offender successfully completes the treatment program.

These proposals are in the same form they were in when they were passed by the Senate as former Bill S-10

Part 3, which is comprised of clauses 52 through 166, proposes post-sentencing reforms to better support victims and to increase offender accountability.

Canadians have told us they expect their government to ensure that offenders are held accountable for their crimes because only then can they have complete confidence in our justice system.

Part 3 introduces reforms previously contained in bills in the previous Parliament. It includes proposals from the ending early release for criminals and increasing offender accountability act that would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to recognize the rights of victims, increase offender accountability and responsibility, and modernize the disciplinary system for inmates.

As now proposed in Bill C-10, it includes technical modifications that would delete provisions that were ultimately passed as part of the Abolition of Early Parole Act, as well as clarifications regarding, for example, sentence calculations, adding new offences recently enacted by other legislation, and proposes to change the name of the National Parole Board to the Parole Board of Canada.

It includes proposals previously contained in Bill C-5, the Keeping Canadians Safe (the International Transfer of Offenders) Act and which seek to enhance public safety by enshrining in law a number of additional key factors in deciding whether an offender would be granted a transfer back to Canada. The bill proposes these reforms as originally introduced.

It includes proposals included in the Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act in the previous Parliament and that propose to expand the period of ineligibility for a record suspension, currently referred to as a "pardon", and to make record suspensions unavailable for certain offences and for persons who have been convicted of more than three offences, prosecuted by indictment, and for each of which the individual received a sentence of two years or more. This bill corrects inconsistencies that occurred in the former bills before Parliament.

One of the areas of criminal law I received an extensive number of letters, emails and calls about is that dealing with violent and repeat young offenders. I have been particularly interested in correspondence I have received from young students themselves and I am always pleased to hear everyone's views on this subject.

Part 4, which is found at clauses 167 through 204, proposes reforms to the Youth Criminal Justice Act to strengthen its handling of violent and repeat young offenders.

Government Orders

These reforms include: highlighting the protection of the public as a principle, making it easier to detain youth charged with serious offences pending trial; ensuring that prosecutors consider seeking adult sentences for the most serious offences; prohibiting youth under the age of 18 from serving a sentence in an adult facility; and requiring police to keep records of extrajudicial measures. These reforms were previously proposed in Sébastien's law, which had been extensively studied by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights when it died on the order paper in the previous Parliament.

• (1530)

The bill includes changes to address concerns that had been highlighted by the provinces regarding the pretrial adult sentencing and deferred custody provisions in the former bill. A number of the provinces requested a less restrictive regime for the pretrial detention provisions than that of Bill C-4, and therefore the changes found in this bill respond by providing more flexibility to detain youth who are spiralling out of control and who pose a risk to the public and to themselves.

The test for pretrial detention will be self-contained in the act without reference to other sections of the Criminal Code.

Other changes are more technical, if that is possible, and include removing Bill C-4's proposed amendments in two areas: deleting reference to the standard of proof for an adult sentence, and the expanded scope of deferred custody and supervision orders.

Last, part 5, which is found at clauses 205 through 207, proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to authorize immigration officers to refuse work permits to foreign nationals and workers where it would protect them against humiliating and degrading treatment, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking. These proposals are in the same form they were in when they were previously proposed in former Bill C-56, the preventing trafficking, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable immigrants act.

I would point out as well that the proposed reforms would come into force in the same manner as originally proposed by the predecessor bills. Part 1 would come into force upon receiving royal assent, and the balance would come into force on a day to be fixed by the governor in council. This will enable us to consult with the provinces and territories on the time needed to enable them to prepare for the timely and effective implementation of these reforms.

I realize that I have taken some time to go through some of the details of this bill. We were very clear in the last election that this was a priority for this government. We have put these bills together and they better protect victims. As members know, in all the legislation that we have introduced, we always highlight how it better protects victims in this country and stand up for the interests of law-abiding Canadians.

I am pleased and proud to be associated, as are my colleagues, with this important piece of legislation.

• (1535)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, the public safety minister has pretty well lost all credibility when it comes to estimating what these crime bills are going to cost.

I point out the estimate he made originally on a couple of bills. His estimate was that it was going to cost \$90 million. That escalated up into the hundreds of millions and then into the billions. We are up to \$2 billion now just on the bills that have already been through the House of extra costs to the Government of Canada, and more important, to the provinces, because more of the burden has gone there.

With regard to this omnibus bill, are you planning to present to justice committee and/or the House a full analysis of how much it is going to cost the federal treasury and the provincial and territorial treasuries?

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind all members to direct their questions through the Speaker's chair.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the hon. member will remember that when the public safety minister and I were before a committee of the House of Commons, we tabled hundreds of pages giving breakdowns and an analysis of what these pieces of legislation would cost the Canadian taxpayer.

In one sense I am pleased. If those members are truly worried about expenditures by the federal government, this is something new. I really have not heard this too much from the NDP over the years. Let us be fair. Most of the questions are always about spending more money. Those are the ones we get. If those members are now worried that somehow taking violent criminals off the street is going to cost money, I can assure them that the Minister of Public Safety has taken that all into consideration. Hundreds of pages have been tabled before them.

I would ask the hon. member to please look at the cost to victims in this country. Victims tell me every time I see them that they pay most of the costs. A study by the Department of Justice in 2008 confirms that. About 83% of all the costs of crime in this country are borne by victims. If those members are worried about costs, about taking a violent criminal off the street and locking up that individual, that is okay because that is their concern and their priority. That is fine, but they should also worry about the victim, the law-abiding Canadian who could be a constituent of theirs. I want them to worry about that individual as well.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this morning the minister appeared on *Canada AM* on CTV. He was interviewed by Seamus O'Regan, who asked him five times what the cost would be to the Canadian public, to the taxpayers, of the implications of this bill. Each time the minister refused to answer.

The minister has been asked several times today in the House of Commons, and perhaps he was asked the same question elsewhere. He still has failed to tell the House.

Government Orders

In fact, one of the minister's answers to Seamus O'Regan was that it would be a sustainable cost. If he can come to the conclusion that it will be sustainable, then surely he must know the amount. Does he know the amount and is not willing to tell the Canadian people, or will he tell us today? Will he give us the answer to the question he has been asked all day long?

If the minister absolutely refuses to answer the question of what the bill will cost, perhaps he will answer the question of how many times he has been asked that today.

• (1540)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I think I have been very clear. I can refer the hon. member to the hundreds of pages that were tabled before the parliamentary committee just prior to the previous election. I invite him to go through all those hundreds of pages and to note the comments of my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, with respect to this.

I did indicate that in 2008 there was a Department of Justice study on the costs of crime. It estimated that approximately \$99 billion is the cost of crime in this country. I will repeat that so the hon. member understands. The cost of crime is \$99 billion.

I appreciate that this is not a priority for the hon. member or for his party, but it is a priority for the Conservative Party that 83% of that cost is borne by the victims of crime. They are the ones who pay the price. I would hope that at some point in time those members will stand up and say that they are worried about costs and have become fiscal conservatives and they are worried about spending every dime, but they realize that most of the cost continues to be borne by victims in this country, who are the ones we have to stand up for. Those are the ones we have to protect.

I want the support of the hon. member and his party.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a British Columbian, I welcome members to visit the Okanagan any time.

It is a pleasure to be here and to have an opportunity to thank my hon. colleague for keeping our campaign commitment to keep our streets and our communities safe.

There was a horrific shooting this summer in our community. In British Columbia organized crime and the gangs, guns, and drug trafficking are serious issues. I am very appreciative that our government is committed to bringing some balance to standing up for victims within our court system.

One of the concerns raised is that judges are losing some of their ability to decide and that the government is forcing their decision making. I stand to be corrected but it is my understanding that the flexibility will remain within the judicial system and we are providing more tools for our law enforcement and judicial systems to be more effective and efficient.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I certainly thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for his continuing interest in this. I very much appreciate his support on all these efforts to better protect Canadians.

Our job as legislators is to provide guidelines for the courts. We provide maximum sentences on all criminal law legislation.

I recall a colleague saying many years ago, "Why put a maximum on? Just let the courts decide. If they want to give a guy more than five years, do not put a maximum". I said that it was our job as legislators to put a maximum. On many occasions we are putting minimum sentences as well, but within the guidelines that we provide to the courts, it is obviously up to the courts where a sentence should lie for an individual who has been found guilty.

Many of those mandatory sentences are for drug crimes. I appreciate that and certainly it is my hope that this bill will quickly go to committee and will soon become the law of this country.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, in terms of the history, since 2006 in the justice committee and the public safety committee, I have repeatedly asked the various ministers of the government for cost assessments of all the bills that have gone through in this period of time. The information we got from the minister a few minutes ago was grossly inaccurate in that regard. I am not new to this file. I am not new to asking about the costs.

I ask the minister again. Is he going to say to the House at some point that he has gone to the public accounts officer, that he has checked with other sources and provide his analysis, not what the government did last time, even after it was found in contempt of the House for not providing this information? At best, it gave about 60%, probably only about 40%, of the information that the Parliamentary Budget Officer wanted to make a proper assessment.

Is the government going to give it all to us this time and is it going to do a valid assessment both for the federal government and the provinces?

• (1545)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I invite the hon. member to have a look at the documentation that was tabled before the committee. There were hundreds of pages of breakdowns.

What is really going on here is that if one does not agree that some of these violent individuals should be taken off the street, if one does not agree that people who are sexually exploiting children should receive mandatory minimum sentences, one will never be satisfied with the cost. I and my colleagues emphasize that the costs are borne by the victims right across the board. I hope, for once, that New Democrats would make that their priority. However, we have not heard it up to this point in time.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is really a historic day with regard to this bill in terms of the debate that we will see in the House over the next number of days and weeks.

It is historic because we have had a government for the last five years that has attempted to reverse the approach to the criminal justice system that we have taken in our country for the better part of 40 years.

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It was about 40 years ago when governments, and not just governments in the ideological centre or left of the political spectrum, but progressive Conservative governments as well, followed this pattern. Then we saw the advance of the Reform and the Alliance, the radical right wing ideology adopted mostly from the United States, which, incidentally, is now reversing itself and looking at Canada as an example of how to deal with crime, with anti-social behaviour and how to build a fair, just and effective criminal justice system.

The current government is driven entirely by ideology, never by fact, never by solid evidence.

It is interesting. I always think of the minister who was the minister of justice before the current one, now the Minister of Public Safety, being challenged by Dan Gardner, one of the reporters or commentators for one of the Ottawa papers, to send him studies that showed deterrence worked, so he did. He sent him five studies. Three of them, when Mr. Gardner looked at them, showed that in fact deterrence did not work. The other two were totally unequivocal and were very subjective in their analysis and were not valid studies based on normal methodology for sociological and criminology studies.

The Conservatives have never been able to do anything better than that.

We heard today again that expression. The Conservatives stand in the House and talk about victims with the assumption that the bill, and the kinds of bills they have passed in the last five years, will somehow deter crime, that they will reduce that \$99 billion figure, which is highly suspect, as I keep repeating. They say they will do something to reduce crime by the use of punishment, by the use of deterrence, by the use of putting thousands and thousands more people into jail.

Not one study, not just in Canada, but any place in the developed world, any place in the democracy we can go to and find a study, says deterrence works. We are about to spend an additional, depending on whose estimates we want to use, anywhere from at least \$2 billion to \$11 billion, \$12 billion and \$13 billion over the next five years on a philosophy, on an ideology on criminal justice that does not work. The bill just repeats that.

This is me wearing my lawyer's hat to some degree. I have stood in the House over the last seven years as the critic for our party on both public safety and justice. I have advocated a number of times that we do need major reform to our Criminal Code and the methodology of doing that would be with omnibus bills. This is not the first omnibus bill we have had from the government; it actually is the second one. When I first heard the Conservatives would do that, I thought that they were finally listening to those of us who have advocated for the need for reform to the Criminal Code because of the duplication and contradictions in the Code, particularly around sentencing, but around offences as well.

However, the Conservatives are not doing that. All they are doing is lumping a whole bunch of bills together and sending them through, a number of bills that have no relevancy to each other. If they are to do an omnibus bill, if they are to do major reform to the Criminal Code, they have to do it systematically. For instance, even

in the bill we are seeing conflict in terms of sentencing principles that they are going to use as an example. We saw it in one of the newspapers reports overnight.

● (1550)

The bill will have this kind of a consequence. We are going to have a mandatory minimum penalty for an offence of trafficking a drug that is double what the mandatory minimum is for the rape of a child. We have that kind of confusion and contradiction just in this bill, and we have huge numbers of those kinds of contradictions.

Therefore, if we were really intent on building an effective criminal justice system that did not have these kinds of contradictions, that make it difficult for our police, judges, defence lawyers and the prosecutors to enforce the law, we would have started reform a long time ago.

I am going to go to the bill itself. As opposed to what the minister said, the bill is actually a composition of nine bills from the past Parliament. Although it has five parts to it, it actually encompasses nine different bills, and I will not have enough time to address all of them. Therefore, I will concentrate my comments, because of the cost factor, on the drug part of the bill.

This will be the third time that the bill is before the House. It has had some changes since the first time, but it is essentially the same. When it came before the House at that time, both the Conservative government and the Liberal party supported the bill. They got it passed. I am quite sure it went to the Senate. We had an election and it failed and we started over again.

In the last Parliament, it was a bill that came out of the Senate. At that time because of a change in leadership for the Liberals, they flip-flopped and decided they would oppose it.

We have been opposed to the bill in its various incarnations for two reasons: the cost; and the reality that the cost is totally unjustifiable in terms of this bill doing anything to combat drug trafficking. It is easy for us to say that.

I live in the most southern part of our country. In fact, I live in an area of the country that is south of our neighbours to the north in the United States. I have watched the United States legislature try to deal with the problem of drug trafficking. Starting about two and a half years ago, the Americans began to repeal legislation that had mandatory minimums. It was simply that they were going bankrupt in terms of keeping that many people in jail.

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There was a similar pattern in California that hit its epitome a year ago in the spring. In the jails, people were double and triple bunking and were in fact being housed in the cafeterias and the gyms, with no rehabilitation or treatment, or sense that these people were going to get out, with a large number of them with mental health problems as well, the usual pattern. California was going to be required by the courts to release 35,000 to 45,000 inmates in that year. A good number of these inmates had been convicted of serious violent crimes, had no treatment or rehabilitation while they were in and they were going back out onto the streets. That kind of crisis occurred in the United States when it passed these kinds of laws and proceeded to enforce them. Over a period of 10 to 15 years, the prison population doubled there.

We are following the same route. It is back to the government refusing to look at the facts and accept any hard evidence of what this kind of legislation does. It is going down the same route that the United States went down between 15 and 20 years ago, and is now reversing itself. Now the Conservative government is starting down the same path.

It is not just the United States. If we go around the globe very few other countries have attempted this, I am happy to say. No other government in our western democracies has attempted this successfully. It does not work, yet in the next five years we are about to spend between \$10 billion to \$13 billion just on this bill.

• (1555)

The drug part of the bill in particular is going to increase the prison population, mostly at the provincial level. We have provinces that are double-bunking now to the rate of 200%. They are over capacity by 200%. There is not a province or territory that is not in excess of its capacity.

Perhaps the House should also appreciate this fact: we have signed on to an international protocol that says we will not do double-bunking at either the provincial or the federal level. We are in complete contravention of that protocol and have been for a number of years, and it is going to get much worse.

I know I am emphasizing the drug part of the bill because it is where the costs primarily are. It is not the only area, but it is the overwhelmingly large one. The vast majority of the people who are going to be affected by the bill are not the Hells Angels, not the bikers, not the people we have seen historically as organized crime. Again, I say that because we have studied the situation in the United States when it passed bills identical to this one. It is the low-hanging fruit that gets caught. The vast majority of those people, the petty traffickers in marijuana in particular, are the ones who get caught, especially because they only have to have six plants, and they do not have to be six-foot-high plants. It just says more than five plants. Someone with six plants that are three inches high will be considered a trafficker, in spite of some of the comments we have heard from the minister.

I do not think the minister has ever done a drug trafficking trial. I have, and the way the act is worded, anyone who has six plants or more cannot justify that he or she is not a trafficker. We are going to have a huge number of young people who are now being convicted of simple possession going to jail, including some of the children of the people sitting across the aisle from me and some of the children

of the people sitting on our side of the table. They will be going to jail for at least six months simply because they have six marijuana plants.

That is the consequence of the bill, and we are going to end up, as taxpayers, paying the toll.

I would like to deal in some detail as well with the bill that was Bill C-4 in the last Parliament, the bill that dealt with young offenders.

This one had a very interesting history. It was the attempt on the part of the government to return us to an old pattern of history, when we used to treat youth much more harshly than we have in the last 15 or 20 years. We heard from the minister again today that they are justifying it on the basis that they are going after the young offender who is already a serious violent offender. I say this from all of the parties that are sitting in the House and that were at the justice committee last time that we all accepted that as a reality. That is just a historical side note. We had major reform to the young offender law almost six years ago now. When the minister brought this bill forward, there was a lot of commentary from a number of sides that it was too soon to amend the bill. The committee as a whole, all political parties, said no. It was true generally, and some of the things they were trying to do—in particular, to reintroduce deterrence to young offenders—we rejected. We said no. We said we needed to look at whether there were mechanisms or enforcement tools or legislative tools that we could give our police and our prosecutors, and ultimately our judges, to be able to deal with that small percentage of young offenders who are already serious, violent risks to our society.

• (1600)

We all conceded that this group existed and we also felt that we could do something about it. Interestingly, three prosecutors came before the committee voluntarily. I and the other opposition parties do not take any credit for finding these senior prosecutors of young offenders in their respective provinces of Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Alberta. They got together and asked collectively to come and make presentations.

The first thing they said to the committee was that the government's bill would do just the opposite: it was going to make it more difficult for them to prosecute serious, violent youth offenders.

In the last few weeks I received a letter from the attorney general confirming the prosecutors in Saskatchewan. We had representation from two Conservative governments and two NDP governments before the committee saying that we had messed up really badly, that our bill was going to do exactly the opposite of what we were telling the country it was going to do.

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I take credit for asking them if they could give us the amendments they needed, and they did that. I want to recognize the work that they did. They gave us three amendments. Basically they let the youth criminal justice system focus in on the serious offenders and let the rest of the system work, because the rest of the system, from everything we heard at committee, is working reasonably well. It is effective, fair and just and it deals with youth crime quite effectively, but it is not doing so with serious offenders.

The prosecutors gave us three amendments and came back a second time to present and explain them to us in detail. I asked government members if they would adopt them. They said no. They were so certain they had a perfect bill that in spite of the experts, their own prosecutorial experts, the government refused to accept those amendments.

Interestingly, and I will give them credit for this, in this incarnation, this omnibus bill, Conservatives have taken two of the amendments. The third amendment deals with sentencing of youth as adults, and they need that amendment again for this one. I have no answer for why it is not in here. I was hoping I would have enough time to ask the minister today, but I will have to do that subsequently. However, it is not there.

Those amendments are necessary in the bill. Again, I repeat that the NDP, the Liberals and the Bloc members were prepared to support those amendments, and the government refused to do so simply because, in dealing with the Conservatives, it is their way or the highway. They were absolutely adamant about refusing to take those amendments.

The third part I want to address is the international transfer of prisoners. We have had a long history in this country of signing treaties with other countries that say that if we have one of their citizens convicted of a crime in prison in our country, we will allow the prisoner to apply to his or her country to be returned to that country of origin. Of course, we have the vice versa arrangement for ourselves, so that one of our citizens in another country can apply to be returned to Canada. I do not how long we have had those arrangements, but it has been a number of decades.

When the Conservatives first came into power in 2006, they unilaterally decided they were going to change the pattern and reject a whole bunch of these applications. We went from accepting something in the range of 90% of those applications to less than 50%. There were court applications made against the government's conduct, and it was slapped really hard by the Federal Court.

The Conservatives have now tried to put into the bill what really amounts to absolute discretion for the minister to be able to continue that practice of reducing those numbers. This has created an international incident between ourselves and the United States, with which most of these prisoner exchanges occur. Americans actually sent a note of protest to the Canadian government in January 2010 because it had so radically changed the pattern.

● (1605)

The bill has major problems. There are parts of it that New Democrats could in fact support; I could not get to them because my time is just about up, but with the attitude we have of the

government, it is going to be very difficult to work out those kinds of compromises.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have three quick points to make to my colleague, whose remarks I enjoyed, as I always do. These points all relate in one way or another to costs.

First, he is forecasting massive increases in the prison population. Until now the forecasts that were put out by Correctional Service Canada were based on what we did in the past, and these huge increases simply have not materialized, so I am not sure what he is basing that on.

Second, obviously a lot of prison structures are very old and crumbling and a lot of infrastructure has to be replaced right now, regardless of anything else. Would he acknowledge that replacement will cost some amount of money? I do not know what that is.

Third, I think we all believe in rehabilitation and deterrence, but it is difficult to quantify. The statistics I have seen say that a habitual criminal commits about 15 offences a year. Would he acknowledge that there is a significant cost, which we really could not determine, to society and victims of leaving that person on the street for a year, when as a habitual criminal the person could be incarcerated, which would prevent the 15 crimes that would prey on victims?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton Centre for those questions, although I still have not forgiven him for the damage he caused to the centre. I could not bring my grandson to visit it the day I was there. The centre is right across the street from his office, and I am sure he caused the flood in the centre the day I was there and my grandson could not visit.

With regard to past estimates that I know the government has been putting out, those estimates are based longitudinally. They have not all come to fruition up to this point. They will eventually. I do not think the estimates are that far off.

Let me say to the member that since the Conservative government has been in power, the budget for corrections has almost doubled. It is not quite 100%, but it is very close, just in five years. It almost six years now, but we have not seen the last year, so it probably has doubled by now. That is very real. Even though those estimates have not fully come to fruition, I believe they will, because I think they were properly done by Correctional Service Canada. We have very good Correctional Service Canada people. We need more of them, but they are very good.

With regard to prison repair, I agree with that. I know that in Ontario, in and around Kingston in particular, there are prisons that are over 100 years old and have had minimal repair in that period of time. There is no objection if that was the purpose, but that is not the purpose of the money that is being proposed to be spent. It is to house new prisoners, not to do the major repairs that are needed.

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Finally, with regard to habitual criminals, there are studies in the United States that suggest or show exactly what the member has suggested, which is that if people are kept in prison longer, the crime rate is going to go down. For a short period of time, I would accept that. However, when criminals are in for an extra length of time, they are in prisons where there is no rehabilitation for them at all. That was the California experience. There was no rehabilitation at all. When they get out, the crimes they commit are more violent, and in fact the crime rate goes up.

● (1610)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality is that we have seen this type of law and order policy in the United States, as he has articulated. If putting more people in prison for longer periods of time created safer communities, American cities would be the safest in the world, because nobody incarcerates more people than the Americans.

Earlier today, in response to the hon. member's questions, the minister stated that he had totally fulfilled the demands of the House in terms of the information requested regarding the costs of the government's justice bills.

I want to inform the hon. member that the answer given by the minister earlier today in the House was false. In fact, it was my motion that led to the minister's appearance before the operations and estimates committee due to the Speaker's ruling of contempt of Parliament by the Conservative government. When the minister appeared before the government operations committee, he did a data dump the morning of his appearance, dumping thousands of pages of paper, and he responded to only 26% of the information requested by Parliament for the cost of the legislation.

How does the hon. member feel about the continued stonewalling by the government and the minister of this Parliament, and about their refusal to respect Parliament and provide that kind of—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and I am quite aware of the circumstances of how that occurred. For the first time in the history of this Parliament, and perhaps of every Parliament in the Commonwealth, a government was found in contempt for adamantly refusing to provide material. The hon. member is right. The contempt did continue after the contempt order and the majority vote that took place which found the government in contempt.

Specifically with regard to crime bills, it is my understanding that the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated that under that contempt order the information he received was no better than 60% and perhaps as little as 40%. Accordingly, he was not fully satisfied with the results of the analysis he had prepared. However, in retrospect, he did provide a much closer analysis than what was prepared by the Minister of Public Safety.

The Minister of Public Safety repeatedly told the House that the crime bills would only cost \$90 million, a figure which has now increased to \$2.2 billion. These are the kinds of discrepancies we are seeing.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, it appears sometimes we seek justice through headlines. Whenever there is a violent crime somewhere in the country the media and talk shows go on about it for weeks feeding the fever of all Canadian citizens who then get rattled and feel that we have to do something.

I take offence when the Minister of Justice indicates or hints to the Canadian people that we on this side of the House do not care for victims. That is nonsense. There is not one member of Parliament from any party in the House who is not concerned about crime and what it does to victims in the country.

The serious concern I have is that I have heard the anecdotal and not factual evidence that one-third of our prison inmates have mental illness. There is a huge push in this country from academia, corporations and governments of all sides to deal with this serious issue. However, the provincial and federal governments ignore the plight of the mentally ill and incarcerate them. Instead of having institutions for the mentally ill to get the help they need, they are thrown in jail.

Would my hon. colleague comment on how many more people who commit crimes due to mental illness would find themselves incarcerated instead of getting the help they so richly deserve if the bill goes through?

● (1615)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, with regard to the assessment, Mr. Head, who is the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada, was before the public safety committee two or three years ago. His estimate then was that 50% of all inmates in federal prisons would be able to get mental health treatment under our provincial health plans.

On the 33% or 30% to 35% figures that my friend raised of those who have been diagnosed with serious mental health problems and given a prognosis, treatment in fact would be available in the community. However, very little of that treatment is available in our federal institutions.

I forget what the bill was we were dealing with a year or so ago, but evidence came forward from a psychologist who had received the Order of Canada and was recognized as an international expert in treating mentally ill people who had committed serious crimes that 10 psychologists had been cut out of the federal system in the Kingston area and that their contracts would not be renewed.

In terms of the second part of my colleague's question on the consequences of the drug bill, it is the small-time traffickers who are drug abusers and addicts who would end up in prison.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cardigan, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, Canada Revenue Agency.

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[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today marks the second speech that I have given in the House. It has been a busy week.

As some of the members may know, I am a new member of Parliament for the riding of Charlottetown, the birthplace of Confederation. I trust I will be allowed this opportunity to thank the good people of Charlottetown for bestowing upon me the honour and privilege of representing them here in the chamber.

Madam Speaker, I very much look forward to working with you and with my colleagues on both sides of the House.

As members may know, my colleague, the justice critic and hon. member for Mount Royal, a former minister of justice and a world-renowned advocate of human rights, a law scholar and professor, is at the United Nations today participating in meetings. We wish him, along with our Prime Minister, well in their deliberations at the United Nations meetings as the world watches the events regarding the Middle East unfold.

I am here today to talk about Bill C-10. The bill is large and includes nine bills from the previous Parliament all lumped into one big buffet of division and fear. The title of the bill goes on for about seven lines. I can just imagine how much time, effort, deliberation in meetings and agonizing it must have taken to come up with a name for this bill.

I tried to imagine some of the other names that might have fallen on the cutting room floor. I will speculate on a few of the names that did not quite make it: an act to divide Canadians and keep the Conservative base happy; an act to provide inmates for empty prisons; an act to fill prisons in order to build new ones; an act to take more aboriginals off reserves and put them into prisons; an act to provide a Conservative comprehensive affordable housing strategy; an act to make prisons the largest mental health institutions in Canada; and, one I particularly like, an act to stimulate the penal sector.

After many lunches, dinners and late night meetings, the Conservatives finally settled on a short title for the bill. I understand this was the runner-up to the one that actually made it, that being, we won a majority, now get out of our way act.

Never has a piece of legislation been more deserving of the title "an act" because that is what this is. It is a performance. Facts be damned, crime statistics and effective crime prevention do not matter because the government is determined to put on a show. Simply put, it is a disgrace of the highest order.

With all the new prisons being built as a result of this "hang 'em high" mentality, one wonders who will staff these new prisons. Is this an opportunity for an alternate service delivery or a public-private partnership? Perhaps we could have the operations of these institutions farmed out for profit. Is that the plan? I am sure it is a question that the Conservative propaganda machine will surely avoid and deny.

This is a bill worthy of mockery. It is a bill that plays on fear, not hope.

● (1620)

It is a bill that ignores evidence and facts. It creates an illusion that crime is out of control and there is mass insurrection in the streets. It is without costing. It is a bill that does not reflect the values of Canadians as a smart, caring society.

We seem to be well on our way to a system of justice more reflective of our neighbours to the south and not reflective of a country like Canada.

Catherine Latimer from the John Howard Society stated:

We think it will endanger corrections workers and inmates and compromise rights and not promote good corrections and undermine principles of justices and have a disproportionately harsh impact on some of the most vulnerable members of our society...blindly following failed American policies is not in the interest of Canadians—

As it appears that the bill was influenced if not drafted by our Republican friends in the United States, I will quote from a recent U. S. editorial. With regard to crime and prisons it states:

California spends more money on prisons than on higher education. The governor is right—we've got it backwards and it's time to reverse course.

Only sixty-eight percent of our high school students are graduating. Yet we pay prison guards substantially more than teachers.

Fear of crime led us to vote for long prison terms and the three strikes law. We didn't intend to spend \$4 billion more on prisons than colleges—

The less educated our workforce...the more we feed the prisons.

It's time to admit our mistakes and make tough decisions. By pumping so much money into prisons, we're starving education. We cannot afford the consequences.

With regard to crime rates, in a report released earlier this year by Statistics Canada it stated:

Police-reported crime reaches its lowest level since the early 1970's.

It goes on to state that the "police-reported crime rate, which measures the overall volume of crime, continued to decline" right up until last year. In fact last year it was down 5%, "reaching its lowest level since 1973".

There is more. It claims that violent crime is at its lowest since 1999.

Last year both the volume and severity of violent crime fell 3% from the previous year, while the decline in the violent crime severity index was more notably down 6%. This is the fourth straight year where there has been a decline in the violent crime severity index and the largest drop in more than a decade. Overall, violent crimes accounted for just over one in five offences. Among the violent crimes that saw a decline were: attempted murder, down 14%; homicide, down 10%; robbery, down 7%; and serious assault, down 5%. In contrast, increases were reported among firearms offences.

We on this side of the House are partial to public policy based on evidence. However, despite the evidence the Conservatives, or should I say the horsemen of the apocalypse, would like us to believe that there is mass chaos in the streets. Only in the Conservative world would we see a statistic showing firearms offences increasing by 11% only to be followed by the decision to get rid of the gun registry.

I mentioned our aboriginal community earlier in my speech. According to the 2006 census, 3.1% of our adult population identified themselves as aboriginal yet in the same year aboriginal adults accounted for 18% of our prison population in provincial and territorial institutions and 19% in federal institutions.

• (1625)

The bill would do a lot of bad things for Canada, not the least of which is an increase in aboriginal Canadians in our prisons.

How can a government, in any way, be taken seriously when one of the likely results is that the bill would lock up even more aboriginal Canadians? That is a national disgrace.

I understand that my words today might cause some difficulty and, in fact, I would suggest perhaps some disagreement from the members opposition. Although I am a new member of Parliament, I have views, which is part of the reason I am standing here today. My views are rooted in values of fairness and justice. I want to see crime legislation that is evidence-based, cost-effective and focused on crime prevention, not retribution. I will not stand for any suggestion that I, or the members of this caucus, are soft on crime. It is simply not the case. It will be rejected in the strongest possible terms.

I will close by saying that the government pretends to be tough on crime. It pretends to care. It is a game for the Conservatives. It is a diversion from the real issues that matter to Canadians. This week the government House leader told Canadians that the government will be focused on the economy during this session of Parliament and yet the first two days of this House have been occupied, not by proposals to help the economy and create jobs, but by a bill that is not evidence-based and that seeks to divide Canadians. It is a diversion.

The government likes to use slogans and gimmicks. It likes to look tough. Many of us on this side are wondering when the Conservatives will get tough on creating jobs, get tough on fighting poverty, get tough on fighting climate change, get tough on fighting for health care and get tough on helping the most vulnerable.

The only thing the government is tough on is the truth and it is Canadians who will suffer as a result.

• (1630)

[Translation]

I move, seconded by the member for Winnipeg North:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, because its provisions ignore the best evidence with respect to public safety, crime prevention and rehabilitation of

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offenders; because its cost to the federal treasury and the cost to be downloaded onto the provinces for corrections have not been clearly articulated to this House; and because the bundling of these many pieces of legislation into a single bill will compromise Parliament's ability to review and scrutinize its contents and implications on behalf of Canadians".

[English]

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Madam Speaker, does my colleague across the aisle not recognize that in the last election there was a very clear distinction given to Canadians? On one side, there was the Conservative government which would finally get tough on crime and finally reverse the damage that the Liberals did to our criminal justice system by being soft on criminals and ignoring victims. Does he not recognize that the Liberals were reduced to 34 seats? Canadians do not want the Liberal way of dealing with criminals. Could he recognize that, acknowledge it and get in touch with Canadians as they view the criminal justice system today?

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Charlottetown, I should have acknowledged that the amendment was receivable.

The hon. member for Charlottetown.

• (1635)

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that, yes, 40% of those who voted or roughly 25% of Canadians did support her party in the last election. I also acknowledge that there were significantly less who supported our party.

However, I would point out that this absolutely flies in the face of evidence. This is driven by ideology. This absolutely ignores the statistics that indicate that crime is going down. How this can be steam-rolled through in this manner is not reflective of Canadian values. Canadians are better than that. We are a smart, compassionate society.

We need to focus on the root causes. We need to focus on crime prevention. We need to focus on the economy.

When I am in my riding and people come through the door looking for help from their representative in the federal government, it is not crime on the streets that they want to talk about. They want a job.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I will recognize members who are sitting in their proper place.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Charlottetown for his critique of the bill we are now examining on safe streets, otherwise known as the omnibus crime bill.

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My question is whether there are any portions of this bill that the hon. member finds that he might want to support were they not bundled together as an omnibus crime bill. For myself, the justice for victims of terrorism act as a stand-alone bill was one I would have voted for. However, I cannot imagine voting for other sections of this omnibus crime bill, such as those that would make it an offence to have more than five marijuana plants, as an example, to add longer sentences for criminal activity.

Is there any part of this bill the hon. member for Charlottetown could support?

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, the short answer to the question is, yes.

It is most unfortunate that the bill has been presented in the manner that it has, putting together 110 pages and compiling 9 acts. If there were any room for movement, compromise, amendment or to have this bill severed up into pieces, there are elements of it that our party could support. In the manner in which it is presented, it is not supportable.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Madam Speaker, if the motion by the member for Charlottetown were to fail would his party be prepared to support Bill C-10?

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I had hoped that I made that fairly clear in the course of my remarks. Lest there be any confusion, should the motion fail we will most certainly be voting against the bill.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, when I was back in the campaign in May, crime was a big thing. People really wanted to know what we were going to do about crime and they were really concerned that our crime legislation did not actually pass last spring. Now they want to see it pass.

I am kind of concerned why the Liberals, all of a sudden, are starting to back criminals again? Why can they not get behind victims for a change? Why can they not recognize the importance of a victim and preventing victims. Could the member please explain to me why his party in such great support of criminals?

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, here we go again, the language of division. This party and this member are not soft on crime. We are absolutely not backing criminals. I absolutely reject that suggestion and, quite frankly, it is offensive.

We stand in favour of victims. We stand in favour of crime prevention. We stand in favour of putting more resources into the root causes. This is all about division. It is all about streamrolling something through that is based on ideology and not on statistics.

Why will that member not recognize that crime rates are going down and address the root causes? This is not the answer. This is not the right way to go about it.

• (1640)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Charlottetown on his first speech in the House. It was excellent.

Earlier today, the minister, in introducing the bill, talked about his concern for victims, and I think that is a concern that is shared by all members of the House. As my colleague from Sackville—Eastern

Shore said a few minutes ago, it is time the members on the Conservative side recognized and accepted that. However, if this does not have the effect of lowering crime, how does it help victims?

It is reasonable to look at what has happened elsewhere when measures like this have been taken. We just need to look, for instance, at the U.S. where the incarceration rate is 700% higher per capita than it is in Canada. In California, where it had the “three strikes you’re out” rule, there have been huge increases in incarceration. Does it have a much lower crime rate than we do? The fact is, its crime rate, like ours, has been dropping for 20 years. However, the rate of violent crime in the U.S. is still far higher than in Canada, suggesting that what the government is doing here will have no appreciable effect, perhaps none at all, on the rate of crime in Canada and will not help victims whatsoever.

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, the evidence is irrefutable that in the United States this tough on crime legislation, the increasing of mandatory minimum sentences, does not work. It is extremely costly. It costs \$108,000 per year to house an inmate in a federal institution. Is that caring for our economy?

There is absolutely no evidence in Statistics Canada nor in other jurisdictions that have taken this approach that it works. It is ideologically driven and it flies in the face of facts and evidence. For a government that purports to be focused on the economy, it is a backward step.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, the safe streets and communities act fulfills this government's commitment, as noted in the June 2011 Speech from the Throne, to reintroduce law and order legislation to combat crime and terrorism. As highlighted by the Minister of Justice, the bill is in five parts and brings together the criminal law reforms that were proposed in nine bills in the last session.

Amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act are found in part 2 of the bill, from clause 39 through clause 51 inclusively. These amendments are the same as those proposed in Bill S-10, which was introduced in May 2010, passed by the Senate last December and died on the order paper when Parliament was dissolved last March.

I also note that the government first introduced these amendments to address serious drug crimes as Bill C-26 in 2007 and again as Bill C-15 in 2009. We remain committed to enacting these reforms now included in the safe streets and communities act.

These amendments are not about imposing mandatory minimum sentences for all drug crimes. These amendments propose targeted, mandatory minimum sentences for serious drug crimes and ensure that those who carry out these crimes will be penalized. These amendments clearly send the message that Canadians find this type of criminal behaviour unacceptable.

Government Orders

A mandatory minimum sentence is the starting point for the judge's consideration of the appropriate jail term. Where a minimum sentence applies, the sentence imposed by the judge cannot be less. Presently there are no mandatory minimum penalties in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, or CDSA. The CDSA provides for maximum penalties based on the prohibited activity involved as well as on the substances involved. The maximum penalty for the most serious offences involving the most dangerous drugs is life imprisonment.

The most serious drug offences in the CDSA, as measured by their maximum penalty, are trafficking, possession for the purpose of trafficking, importation and exportation and production in respect of schedule I drugs. What are those drugs? They are drugs such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and morphine, and schedule II drugs which are cannabis-related.

All of these offences involving Schedule I drugs are punishable by up to life imprisonment. The offence of trafficking and possession for the purpose of trafficking of cannabis in amounts over three kilograms is punishable by up to life imprisonment, as are the offences of importation and exportation of any amount of cannabis. The offence of producing cannabis is punishable by up to seven years imprisonment.

The least severe penalties in the CDSA for designated substances offences, up to 12 months imprisonment on summary conviction, are reserved for offences involving substances listed in schedules IV and V; that is, substances such as diazepam, or Valium, and secobarbital, Seconal. It should be noted, however, that most of the prohibited activities in the CDSA are legal if committed by someone possessing the proper licence, permit, or exemption.

There are some who do not agree with the drug-related amendments proposed in the bill. They are of the view that serious drug offences do not require a response such as that contained in this proposed legislation. However, serious drug crime is a serious problem in Canada and it requires a serious legislative approach. That is what we are bringing to this issue.

● (1645)

Marijuana cultivation offences have increased significantly in the past several years. According to a study on marijuana grow operations in British Columbia, my home province, in 2003 approximately 39% of all reported marijuana cultivation cases, or 4,514, were located in B.C. Between 1997 and 2000, the total number of these cases increased by over 220%. Although the number of individual operations in B.C. levelled off between 2000 to 2003, the estimated quantity of marijuana produced has increased from 19,729 kilos in 1997 to a seven year high of 79,817 kilos in 2003, due to the size and sophistication of individual operations.

Investigations by BC Hydro indicate the existence of thousands of possible marijuana grow operations. The increase in the illicit production of marijuana has occurred not just in B.C., of course, but across all of Canada.

Available RCMP data indicates a rise in synthetic drug production operations in the last 10 years. The RCMP indicates that there were 25 clandestine labs seized in 2002. In 2008, 43 clandestine labs were seized across Canada. In 2009, 45 clandestine labs were seized by

various Canadian police agencies. The majority of labs seized were methamphetamine and ecstasy labs.

It is in part because of the existence of these illicit activities that the Prime Minister unveiled Canada's national anti-drug strategy in October 2007. The national anti-drug strategy provided new resources to prevent illegal drug use, including illicit drug use by young people, to treat people who had drug addictions and to fight illegal drug crime.

The strategy comprises a two-track approach, one which will be tough on drug crime and the other which will focus on drug users.

The national anti-drug strategy includes three action plans: preventing illicit drug use; treating those with illicit drug dependencies; and combatting the production and distribution of illicit drugs.

The action plan to combat the production and distribution of illicit drugs contains a number of elements, including ensuring that strong and adequate penalties are in place for serious drug crimes. It is within this context that the drug-related amendments of this bill are to be viewed. Moreover, these amendments follow through on one of this government's key priorities, which is combatting crime and making our communities safer for all Canadians.

As I have mentioned, domestic operations related to the production and distribution of marijuana and synthetic drugs have dramatically increased, resulting in a serious problem in some regions of Canada. The situation has reached such a point in some parts of Canada that law enforcement agencies are overwhelmed.

Illicit drug production can pose serious health and public safety hazards to those in or around them. They can produce environmental hazards, pose cleanup problems and endanger the lives and health of whole communities. They are lucrative businesses, and I use that term loosely, and attract a variety of organized crime groups. Huge profits are available with little risk to operators and these profits are used to finance other criminal activities.

The penalties for drug-related offences and the sentences imposed on offenders are considered by many to be too lenient and not commensurate with the level of harm imposed on communities by such operations. The reforms that the government is pursuing in this bill are meant to deal with these concerns.

As members are undoubtedly aware, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act contains a complex offence and penalty structure. Penalties depend on the nature of the prohibited activity and on the type of substance involved. The most problematic and dangerous substances are listed under schedules I and II and the most serious offences involving these substances attract the severest penalties, up to life imprisonment. As I have noted, the CDSA does not currently contain any minimum penalties. The drug-related amendments of the safe streets and communities act propose to enact such minimum penalties for specific offences.

The offences being targeted are: trafficking, possession for the purpose of trafficking, production, importing, exporting and possession for the purpose of exporting drugs.

Government Orders

• (1650)

The drugs that would be covered are schedule I drugs, such as cocaine, heroine and methamphetamine, and schedule II drugs, such as marijuana.

The drug-related mandatory minimum penalty scheme proposed in the bill is based on the presence of specific aggravating factors, most of which are commonly present in serious drug crimes. The scheme would not apply to possession offences or to offences involving drugs such as diazepam or valium.

As I noted at the beginning of my remarks, the drug-related proposals contained in the bill reflect a tailored approach to MMPs for serious drug offences. Some further details about the targeted or tailored regime will assist hon. members in understanding the approach and supporting speedy passage of the bill, we believe.

For schedule I drugs, and that is heroine, cocaine, or methamphetamine, the bill proposes a one year minimum sentence for the majority of the serious drug offences if there are certain aggravating factors. The aggravating factors exist where: the offence is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with organized crime; the offence involved violence, or threat of violence, or weapons or a threat of the use of weapons; or the offence is committed by someone who was convicted or served a term of imprisonment for a serious drug offence in the previous 10 years. If youth are present or the offence occurs in a prison, the minimum sentence is increased to two years.

In the case of importing, exporting and possession for the purpose of exporting, the minimum sentence would be one year if the offence is committed for the purpose of trafficking or the person, while committing the offence, abused a position of trust or authority or had access to an area that is restricted to authorized persons and used that access to commit the offence. The penalty will be raised to two years if the offence involves more than one kilogram of a schedule I drug. Again, these are drugs such as heroine, cocaine, or methamphetamine.

A minimum sentence of two years is provided for a production offence involving a schedule I drug. The minimum sentence for the production of schedule I drugs increases to three years where aggravating factors relating to health and safety are present. That is where: the person used real property that belonged to a third party to commit the offence; the production constituted a potential security, health or safety hazard to children who were in the location where the offence was committed or were in the immediate area; the production constituted a potential public safety hazard in a residential area; or the person placed or set a trap.

For schedule II drugs, such as marijuana, cannabis resin, et cetera, the proposed mandatory minimum sentence for trafficking, possession for the purposes of trafficking, importing or exporting and possession for the purpose of exporting is one year if certain aggravating factors such as violence, recidivism or organized crime are present. If factors such as trafficking to youth are present, the minimum is increased to two years.

For the offence of marijuana production, the bill proposes mandatory penalties based on the number of plants involved: production of six to two hundred plants and if the plants are

cultivated for the purpose of trafficking, six months; production of 201 to 500 plants, the penalty, one year; production of more than 500 plants, two years; and production of cannabis resin for the purpose of trafficking, one year. The minimum sentences for the production of schedule II drugs increases by 50% where any of the aggravating factors relating to health and safety, which I have just described, are present.

It is important to note that the drug-related proposals of the bill are not limited to creating minimum sentences. Amphetamines, as well as the date rape drug GHB and Rohypnol would be transferred from schedule III to schedule I, thereby allowing the courts to impose longer sentences for offences involving these dangerous drugs.

The maximum penalty for producing marijuana would be increased from seven to fourteen years imprisonment. That is the maximum penalty, speaking about the other end of the scale now.

• (1655)

Last, I wish to point out that this legislation is not just about punishing drug offenders by enhancing the sentence provisions. The proposed legislation would allow the courts, including drug treatment courts, to exempt an offender from the mandatory minimum sentence that would otherwise be imposed where the offence involved no other aggravating factors other than a previous conviction for a serious drug offence, and the offender successfully completes a treatment program.

The proposed reforms to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act also require that within five years after the coming into force of these provisions, a committee of the Senate or of this House or a committee of both places undertake a comprehensive review of these provisions and their operation, including, my friend opposite will be pleased to hear, a cost benefit analysis of the minimum sentence provisions.

It is a fundamental principle of the Canadian sentencing framework that a sentence should be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. The Criminal Code provides that the purpose of sentencing is to impose sanctions on offenders that are just in order to contribute to the respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society, something we all want.

Accordingly, the objectives in sentencing are to denounce unlawful conduct, deter the offenders and others from committing crimes and separate offenders from society where necessary, as well as to assist in rehabilitating offenders, have them accept responsibility for their actions and repair the very real harm that they have caused to victims or the community.

I would submit to members of the House and to Canadians in general that the proposed drug related mandatory minimum penalties contained in this bill meet these requirements. These are strong measures but they are reasonable and they are meaningful, and a meaningful response to a problem that is increasing in and plaguing our cities.

The manner in which these minimum penalties would apply is intended to ensure that they do not result in grossly disproportionate sentences being handed down.

Government Orders

As parliamentarians, we are this country's lawmakers. It is incumbent upon us to see that our laws provide appropriate and adequate measures to address this very serious problem.

Some members of the House may be of the view that serious drug offences do not require a response such as the one contained in the bill. However, serious drug crime is a growing problem in Canadian cities and in smaller towns, and a serious legislative response is required.

The government has made tackling crime a priority in order to make our streets and our communities safer. This bill is a reasonable, balanced and narrowly structured approach which the government is taking toward realizing this goal.

I am certain that we will have the support of the majority of the members of the House for these measures. I ask everyone to please consider them carefully.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, currently, only one out of five prisoners has access to anger management programs or to drug and alcohol abuse programs. Right now, these prisoners are released without having had access to treatment, which increases their risk of reoffending. This bill will send even more people to prison, which will increase pressure on the limited resources for these programs.

How can the government introduce a bill that will send even more people to jail, when existing prisoners do not even have access to the rehabilitation treatment they need?

[English]

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Madam Speaker, the government does not create offenders. We are not in that business. We are in the business of dealing with offenders when offences have been committed and standing up for victims of crime.

With respect to the issue of the mentally ill in prisons, we are aware of that. It is a serious problem. It is one the Canadian Bar Association has identified and it is one we continue to work on with our partners in the provinces who are primarily responsible for treatment and those kinds of health issues. However, that does not make the suffering of a victim any less and it does not make their recovery any shorter.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a different concept of what harm reduction is. To me, harm reduction has less to do with the penalty phase in drug offences and more to do with the abuses that are caused by drugs, trying to rehabilitate and the programs that we have, which is more of an international concept.

I do want to speak to the issue of the mandatory minimum as it serves as a deterrent to crime. Now I ask this honestly. I am not infusing any opinion at this point. I would like to hear the hon. member's opinion. The hon. member says that in order to make the streets safe, we are imposing a mandatory minimum. We have heard from my NDP colleague who spoke passionately about mandatory minimum records around the world and, in many cases, it did not live up to what was expected.

In this particular situation, if a mandatory minimum is imposed, will it actually deter the crime that is being spoken about here? Will it actually make communities that much safer?

I would like the hon. member to explain reducing crime and reducing the number of future victims as a concept of mandatory minimums.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Madam Speaker, would that I had a crystal ball and I could determine ahead of time just what all the effects would be both of crime and the impact on victims.

What we do see in the 2008 Department of Justice study is that the victims of crime bore 83% of the cost of crime in that year in Canada, which was over \$99 billion. Costs include costs to property, costs to time off work and costs of injuries. There are so many costs borne by the victims.

When we speak of minimum sentences, we are also trying to achieve some consistency of sentencing across Canada. As the hon. member may know, there are vast differences in sentencing from province to province with respect to very similar circumstances. We are trying to target that as well.

• (1705)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a retired police officer and one who has conducted countless cannabis-marijuana operations and was qualified as an expert for the Supreme Court of British Columbia in relation to grow-ops and the amounts that are required for the purpose of trafficking, I applaud this act coming forward as it would give the police officers, who work on the streets on a daily basis, the knowledge that something will be happening when they lay a charge.

Could my colleague please further explain how this bill would instill confidence to the public, something that Canadians have asked us to do?

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Madam Speaker, even though my colleague sits on the other side, we are on the same side with respect to where we actually sit in the House.

I appreciate what the hon. member said. We are trying to give law enforcement the tools it needs to deal with what is, as evidenced by my earlier remarks, a growing problem. My home province and the hon. member's home province of British Columbia particularly know the damage and costs caused by large grow-op operations, the connections to organized crime, the use of these operations and their products as currency in other crime, and it escalates from there.

This gives law enforcement some better tools to deal with those situations.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech by the parliamentary secretary. I have had occasion to meet her a couple of times outside the House. I have always found her to be very reasonable and rational. I think we will have to say that we simply disagree on the efficacy of mandatory minimum sentences.

I would like to ask the hon. member about another provision of the bill, which she did not touch on, which was the international transfer of prisoners. I think this is very much a public safety issue.

Government Orders

Would the member not agree that it would be better for almost all of those international prisoners, rather than completing their sentence abroad and coming back to Canada with no notice to Canadians and with no supervision, to be transferred back here and, on their release, be subject to our monitoring and parole system?

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Madam Speaker, with respect to that particular aspect, that is under public safety. As I am Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, it is not directly under my ministry. We do recognize that this is an issue when are incarcerated in other countries. It is something that the minister needs to consider when agreeing with transfers. There are inter-jurisdictional issues that come into play. In other words, it depends on the country, our relations with that country, how the rule of law is seen in that country and what that country's laws are.

However, we are aware that this is something we need to be vigilant about.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. parliamentary secretary if the government would give any consideration to allowing this House to consider these individual bills as individual bills and not as an omnibus bill. The omnibus bill does present difficulties for many of us who would like to see amendments to some sections, approval of others and so on. However, as a package, this presents problems.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Madam Speaker, I am aware that the member is new to this House, as I am in this session, and, therefore, may not be aware that all of these bills have come before the House before, as mentioned in my early remarks, some going back several years. With respect to the trafficking provisions, it is the fourth time this has come before the House. These will be studied in committee, as all bills are. They will be looked at clause by clause, discussed and witnesses will be heard, but they are being put forward as a comprehensive package. That is what we promised the voters. We are committed to protecting victims of crime. We told the Canadian public that and we will honour our commitments.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, does the member not see the value in terms of investing more resources into things that would prevent crimes from occurring in the first place? I am talking more about crime prevention type of programs by investing in young people so they have alternatives to hanging around the streets. Does the member see the merit in that and would she support those types of initiatives just as enthusiastically as—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has about 40 seconds to respond.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Madam Speaker, in my role as parliamentary secretary and also as a mother of four, I always applaud initiatives that help youth to keep themselves busy, active and engaged in our communities. Politics is a good place to start.

Of course this is all about protecting communities and protecting youth. A lot of these provisions are targeted at helping youth and helping youth get away from this kind of activity. I would always applaud initiatives that help youth.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Conservatives introduced nine pieces of legislation in

one big bundle. There are over 100 pages in the bill. These pieces of legislation fall under the purview of three separate ministries. The bills range from broad changes to our corrections system that are based on a failed U.S.-style approach, to giving the minister absolute power to approve or deny the international transfer of offenders. These changes are sweeping and will fundamentally change several aspects of Canada's criminal justice system.

The way this bill was introduced speaks a lot to the Conservatives' approach to crime. They have introduced a big bill to help them appear to be tough on crime, but again they have proven that they are not smart on crime.

The goal of any changes to our criminal justice system should be public safety first. It should be safer streets and communities. We should accomplish this by finding cost-effective programs and policies that really make a difference. However, that clearly is not the priority of the Conservatives. They are not interested in looking at the evidence or studying the real impacts of the measures in this bill. The way they introduced them in an omnibus bill shows they have no intention of studying impacts. They just want to ram the legislation through before the public learns how ineffective and expensive it will be.

I will say that some measures in the bill make some sense, but unfortunately the vast majority of the bill really does not matter. We need to be able to examine this on a case-by-case basis. This is also an incredibly fiscally irresponsible piece of legislation. Earlier in the House the minister was asked a number of times about the cost. We do not know the cost. How much is it going to cost?

The government is asking us to support a bill it has not costed. It has refused to provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with information so he can cost these initiatives. I imagine the government is withholding that information because it does not want Canadians or Parliament to know how big the tab for its big crime bill is going to be, not just for the federal government but for much of what is going to be downloaded to the provinces. Unfortunately, taxpayers in this country are going to be the ones left to pay this big crime bill's tab.

The experts agree, as many studies have been done, that the Conservative approach on crime is the wrong approach. It is not based on evidence and the majority of these measures will not make our communities any safer.

Across the U.S., governments have tried this before and have seen it fail. We have seen this south of the border. Many of the states are now abandoning the ineffective approach to crime that the Conservative government is pursuing in this country. Governments in the U.S. are abandoning it because it does not work, because it is incredibly expensive and it has been shown to be very ineffective.

I do not know how the members across the aisle can justify ramming a bill through that is so reckless that it has the potential to be financially crippling to the government and will not make any of our communities safer. I come from a community where crime, gang violence and drug-related crimes are real problems. I want to see changes that stop gangs from recruiting young children. I want to see more police officers on the streets. I want prisoners to come out of prison rehabilitated and able to be contributing members of society, but clearly that is not a priority for the Conservative government.

• (1715)

I have a number of concerns with key parts of the bill. One major area is the changes that are being proposed for our pardon system.

Our pardon system needs to be fair to all Canadians and it needs to be strengthened. It must protect public safety by promoting the reintegration of reformed offenders and ensuring that the public is protected from those who still pose a threat to society.

This portion of the bill proposes a number of changes which must be carefully considered.

Changes to the pardon system must be rational, evidence based, and put public safety first. There needs to be a thorough study of the pardon system, and any changes should come from the results of that study. Unfortunately, the Conservatives across the aisle seem more interested in using this issue to score political points.

Of course we need to make changes to protect Canadians from pardons in outrageous cases where clearly our system has failed over the years, but making broad changes, such as disallowing pardons for those with four or more indictable offences, changes the nature of our system completely.

Pardons serve a very important function. They allow people who have made positive life changes and who have abstained from criminal behaviour to be freed from many of the negative impacts of having a criminal record, such as what occurs when securing employment and housing.

Approximately 3.5 million Canadians have a criminal record. I find it hard to believe that the government has thought of the impact these changes will have on these Canadians.

Four offences can occur in one incident. Someone could have one misguided event, but under this legislation the individual would not be able to have his or her record sealed. For people trying to turn their lives around, the inability to get a pardon can have very detrimental implications on their lives.

Employment is a stabilizing factor in reintegrating individuals and the inability to gain employment only increases the risk of reoffending. Stable meaningful employment, as well as the income, housing and social networks that employment can foster, are significant protective factors against reoffending. From a public

safety perspective, this type of incentive offered to individuals trying to reintegrate successfully back into the community makes good sense.

By summarily making pardons more difficult to get, and by doing it without any study or rationale, the Conservative government will make it more difficult for people to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society. If the Conservatives make it more difficult for deserving people to get pardons, those people will not be able to get back into society and will be far more likely to commit crimes in the future. It is entirely possible, in fact very likely, that in some ways this legislation will actually increase crime.

Another area of concern for me are the corrections and conditional release changes in the bill.

Aspects of the bill would open the door to the violation of human rights in Canadian prisons. These changes would have Canada adopt a U.S.-style approach to prisons that is regressive, expensive and which has shown to be very ineffective.

One particularly disturbing part of this legislation about which many experts have expressed concern is the changes to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

The act currently reads that the Correctional Service of Canada must use the "least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of the public, staff members, and offenders". The least restrictive measures language is a time tested and court derived standard for the acceptable treatment of prisoners.

This legislation removes the "least restrictive" language and changes the standard to "measures...that are limited to only what is necessary and proportionate" to the objective for which they are imposed. This change will open the door to more severe treatment of offenders. In the absence of any evidence that the "least restrictive" language is hindering the ability of the CSC to fulfill its mandate, it should not be carelessly discarded.

• (1720)

I support changes to our federal corrections system that will result in more offenders being successfully rehabilitated and reintegrated into communities upon their eventual release. This is the most effective way to promote public safety, to make our communities safer places for our citizens to live. However, the reality is that our federal prison system is lacking in the programs needed to get offenders to turn their lives around.

This omnibus bill creates a paper obligation for prisoners to participate in non-existent rehabilitation programs and then sets out how to punish them for failing to get rehabilitated. To me it makes no sense. Experts in the corrections field have stated very clearly that this is the wrong approach to take. The government is setting itself up for failure because this legislation will not achieve its stated objective. In fact, it will make things worse.

Government Orders

The bill reflects an outdated U.S.-style approach to prisons which wastes money and incarcerates more people for longer. We have seen the results in the United States. Most importantly, it does nothing to reduce reoffences. Public safety means getting smart on crime. Those are not smart changes.

Another part of the legislation that concerns me is the changes regarding the international transfer of offenders. This bill claims to enhance public safety, which of course is something I agree with. However, the bill grants absolute discretion to the minister to pick and choose who is brought back to Canada. The act needs to be strengthened, not shredded. The bill does away with a clear legal process that has been in place since 1978 and it replaces it with decisions made at the minister's whim. This bill opens up the process to bias. It does away with any transparency and accountability.

There is no doubt there are offenders who should not be brought back to this country and public safety needs to be considered when we are making these decisions. There are cases when public safety is enhanced by allowing the transfer to take place, which gives Canada the control of the offender's rehabilitation program and supervision after the offender has finished his or her sentence, rather than have the offender return to Canada unsupervised after finishing a sentence abroad.

To allow the minister such wide-ranging discretion to ignore criteria completely and to use his or her own subjective opinion as to the test for the criteria he or she does consider is wrong. It replaces an established law-based process with a politicized subjective process.

This is not the way to make wholesale changes to our criminal justice system. Before any changes like this are made, Parliament must study their effects. We owe it to Canadians. It is part of our job.

All indications are that the changes Conservatives want to make are the same mistakes that many state governments have made in the United States. We have seen this approach fail in the U.S. Many states are now repealing these laws, but the Conservatives seem determined to repeat mistakes made in the United States. We should be learning from our neighbour's mistakes, not repeating them.

• (1725)

Where does this leave us? What is the goal of this legislation? It would seem that effectiveness is not the goal. The goal seems to be stoking fears among Canadians and playing up those fears for political gain. A responsible approach for any large policy change would be to thoroughly study proposed changes and seek advice from experts. The Conservatives seem intent on refusing to do that and on ramming this through recklessly.

Why are they doing that? It has been mentioned in this place many times before. Key stakeholder after key stakeholder, expert after expert has spoken out against the kinds of legislation that the Conservatives are bringing forward. However, they will not talk about whether or not this will actually make our streets and communities any safer. They will not talk about how this initiative has been tried and has failed elsewhere. They will not talk about how much of a huge financial burden this will be on our economy and on Canadians.

It seems that many goals of this legislation are to score political points and play on fears. New Democrats have been clear about the approach we should be taking. We should be taking an approach that is based on evidence, that works in our communities, that hires more police officers, that is built on more than simply the outdated megaprison system. Most of all, we need an approach that is based on putting public safety first.

I urge the government to listen to experts. Earlier in question period we had the finance minister talking about how the government needs to listen to experts; I encourage the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety to listen to experts, to look at the evidence, to look at the cost, and at the very least to give this massive piece of legislation a proper study in Parliament.

We owe it to Canadians to be clear about the costs and to be clear about the effectiveness of this legislation. It will cost untold billions of dollars and will not make our streets any safer. This is not tough on crime and it is not smart on crime; it is wrong on crime.

• (1730)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that as opposed to some of the other speeches that were given in the House, my colleague's speech is worthy of compliment. I think this is one of his first speeches in the House, and it was on subject matter that is very important to British Columbia. I want to compliment him also for doing giving his speech in what I thought was a respectful tone, which I think is helpful.

The thesis of his speech was that the government should do three things. First he said that we should have thoughtful study before we bring forward legislation. Well, we are halfway through our sixth year as a government, although of course only a couple of months into our majority mandate, and we have tabled this legislation in the past. It is legislation that has been debated thoroughly in the House. In fact, it was a centrepiece of our election campaign platform, and Canadians had an opportunity to have input during the campaign. I can say that after five and a half years, this subject has been studied, and it is indeed time to act.

He said that the government should propose changes. In fact, we are proposing changes. We are proposing changes that we presented to the Canadian people, and the Canadian people have given us a mandate.

He also said we should seek advice. We have sought advice. I have to point out to those Canadians who are watching that what we are doing in this legislation is precisely what we told Canadians we would do if we were entrusted with a majority government. This is what we said we would do, and we are going to do it.

If we were to break up this legislation, as the leader of the Green Party says, she would ask why we were breaking up legislation and say that we were breaking our word with Canadians. If we were to consider a battery of amendments that would slow down the process, the NDP and the opposition would ask why we were not acting and why we were slowing down the process.

What we have done here is what we said we would do if we were elected. It is the right and appropriate thing to do. The opposition is more than free, obviously, to make its case and to propose amendments at committee, but we are going to move forward, because that is what we said we would do.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am a new member to the House. Frankly, over the last number of months and the last couple of years I have read about speaker after speaker and expert after expert talking about this bill and the crime agenda for the Harper government. It failed in the United States. It did not work. In fact, the United States is repealing most of the tough-on-crime laws that were implemented back in the 1980s and 1990s.

To spend billions and billions of dollars on prisons does not make sense to me. Maybe it does to my partners across the aisle, but it does not make sense to me, and I do not think it makes sense to Canadians. I think we need to invest in education. We need to invest in health care. That is where the priority should be. The priority should be jobs.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage mentioned that the member is free to oppose this legislation. I would like to put forward that if we follow democracy to its logical extent, he is in fact mandated to oppose it, as he received the majority of votes in his riding.

Regarding mandatory minimum issues, how does he feel that mandatory minimums in this case will not be able to make the community safe as a stand-alone tool in the toolbox of devices used to help curtail crime and to help victims?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, we have heard this from my Conservative colleagues not only today but many times. They have talked about how they are standing up for victims and how they get behind victims.

The mandatory minimum sentence for marijuana is more than that prescribed for child rape. How is that standing up for victims? That is troubling to me. Members across the aisle need to look at this. How is that standing up for victims?

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it struck me during one of the first speeches in the House by the member for Surrey North that his speech had a common sense to it, a balance of what we should be talking about in the House.

The point he just raised is so troubling. When we pause to think about it, we see that the mandatory minimums for marijuana are more than for child rape. Someone somewhere in the government did not take a good solid look at what the Conservatives were about to do. I would like to hear the member's views on their lack of common sense, which I would suggest is not necessarily common on the other side of the House.

• (1735)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I am the father of two children. I have a 15-year-old and a 5-year-old and I am very concerned that the government proposes a longer sentence for a marijuana offence than it does for the rape of a child. That is troubling to me, as well as the whole concept of where the government is going in regard to

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how many billions it is going to cost. In the United States it has almost brought a number of states to bankruptcy, and they are reversing much of the tough-on-crime legislation introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. We need to learn from our neighbours and not repeat those mistakes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the member for Surrey North to the House and congratulate him on his position as critic for the official opposition on public safety.

I was troubled by his speech. He talked several times about the so-called U.S. failed system and how sending more people to jail does nothing to deter crime or protect citizens. If he truly believes that, if he truly believes that sending more people to jail does nothing to protect society, he must believe that no one should be sent to jail.

Is that his position? If jail is so ineffective as a crime deterrent, does he subscribe to the notion that no one should be sent to jail?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, clearly the premise of the question is absolutely wrong.

We believe people should be punished for crimes that are committed, but the punishment must fit the crime. We must look at it in a little bit bigger context. We cannot just narrowly focus on setting minimums. It is very troubling when a minimum sentence for marijuana use is longer than for the rape of a child. That is very troubling to me.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's speech. He talked about crime, the drug problems that exist in his community, and street gangs. He also spoke very clearly about the ineffectiveness of the harsh legislative measures that have been taken in other countries to try to reduce crime. Those measures have not worked.

I wonder if he could give us some examples of measures that he believes would be more effective in reducing crime and recidivism.

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of ways corrective measures have been put into place.

We can have better programs in the prisons to help rehabilitate prisoners so that when they do come out, they are better able to integrate into society more productively.

We need to have better programs for our children and our youth, and more programs in schools. These programs would keep our youth from hanging out at the local 7-Eleven stores or from being recruited by local gang members. We need recreation programs for our kids so that they would not only have a healthy life but would also be able to stay away from criminal activities.

Certainly there are many things that can be done in order to have safer communities

However, this approach by the Conservative government, this tough-on-crime approach, has not worked anywhere in the world. In fact, anywhere it has been tried, they have been repealing those laws. They are getting rid of them and focusing more on youth and more on preventative programs.

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In Texas alone there were 21 youth detention centres. Can we guess what happened? They have now reduced that number to about five or six. That is clearly the right approach, and they have saved billions of dollars in prison costs.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise here today to speak at second reading of Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

As many of my colleagues know, this government committed to introducing once again—yes, once again—any law and order bills that died on the order paper at the dissolution of the 40th Parliament.

The proposed changes aim, for example, to protect children from sexual crimes, to clarify ineligibility for conditional sentences and pardons, and to protect other vulnerable members of our society.

With all that in mind, the bill before us constitutes a comprehensive bill incorporating all the changes previously proposed in nine separate bills introduced during the previous parliament.

The first part of the bill—clauses 2 to 9—contains the changes suggested in the former Bill S-7, the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act.

Part 2 contains clauses 10 to 51 of the bill, which include the amendments found in former bills C-54, the Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act, which was designed to protect children from sexual predators and certain sexual offences; C-16, the Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act, intended to limit the use of conditional sentences; and S-10, the Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act, to increase sentences for serious drug-related offences.

Part 3—clauses 52 to 166—includes measures to increase the accountability of offenders, eliminate pardons for serious crimes and modify the factors considered in the international transfer of Canadian offenders. These amendments were contained in former bills C-39, the Ending Early Release for Criminals and Increasing Offender Accountability Act; C-23B, the Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act; C-59, the Abolition of Early Parole Act; and C-5, the Keeping Canadians Safe (International Transfer of Offenders) Act.

Part 4 of the bill—clauses 167 to 204—amends the Youth Criminal Justice Act to better protect Canadians against violent young offenders. These amendments were included in former Bill C-4, Sébastien's Law (Protecting the Public from Violent Young Offenders).

The last part of the bill—clauses 205 to 207—proposes amendments contained in former Bill C-56, the Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act, that would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in order to protect workers who want to work in Canada and are at risk of being subjected to humiliating or degrading treatment, including sexual exploitation.

In particular, I would like to elaborate on clause 34 of Part 2 of the bill, which seeks to curtail the use of conditional sentences for some property crimes and other serious crimes.

As I mentioned earlier, these amendments were contained in a previous bill, Bill C-16, which died on the order paper with the dissolution of the third session of the 40th Parliament. However, there are some technical differences, which I will discuss later.

Currently, under the Criminal Code, conditional sentencing, sometimes referred to as house arrest, can be imposed when an offence is not punishable by a mandatory minimum sentence and the court hands down a prison sentence of less than two years.

In fact, since December 2007, conditional sentences have no longer been available for indictable offences with a maximum prison sentence of 10 years or more in the case of serious personal injury offences, terrorism offences or organized crime offences.

• (1745)

What is more, the court imposing a conditional sentence has to be satisfied that serving the sentence in the community will not jeopardize the safety of the community and that the sentence is consistent with the fundamental purpose and principles of sentencing.

It is important to note that the fundamental purpose of sentencing, as set out in section 718 of the Criminal Code, is to contribute to respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by imposing just sanctions that have one or more of the following objectives: to denounce unlawful conduct; to deter the offender and other persons from committing offences; to separate offenders from society, where necessary; to assist in rehabilitating offenders; to provide reparations for harm done to victims or the community; and to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders.

The Criminal Code also informs us that a just sanction is a sanction that is proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. To achieve this, the courts take into consideration aggravating and mitigating factors in each case. Before describing the key aspects of the proposed changes, I want to provide some background on the provisions in the Criminal Code on conditional sentences.

Conditional sentencing came into effect in 1996, when the government wanted, among other things, to reduce excessive use of incarceration for less serious crimes. I repeat: less serious crimes. Moreover, the information document that accompanied these sentencing reforms states that the addition of conditional sentencing as a new form of sentencing means that offenders who have committed a less serious crime and who otherwise would be incarcerated can serve their sentence in the community under close supervision.

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The limits that I mentioned earlier were established in order to guarantee that conditional sentences could be given only for less serious crimes, in keeping with the fundamental principles and purpose of sentencing. However, in the years following the creation of this type of sentencing, there has been a complete lack of consistency when it comes to determining when conditional sentencing is appropriate.

At the time, many court decisions gave a conditional sentence for serious and violent crimes. This contributed to the public's loss of faith in the justice system. Clearly, many people, and some provinces and territories, wondered whether the limits on conditional sentencing set out in the Criminal Code were sufficient.

In order to deal with this lack of consistency in conditional sentencing, this government introduced Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment) on May 4, 2006. This bill proposed the elimination of conditional sentencing for any indictable offence with a maximum prison sentence of 10 years or more. However, Bill C-9 was amended by the opposition parties to limit the ban on conditional sentencing to indictable offences with a maximum prison sentence of 10 years or more that constitute serious personal injury offences, terrorism offences or criminal organization offences. These amendments took effect on December 1, 2007.

The definition of serious personal injury was developed in the context of dangerous offenders, which is why this definition is found in part 24 of the Criminal Code. According to this definition, serious personal injury offences include any indictable offence, other than high treason, treason, first degree murder or second degree murder—punishable by at least 10 years in prison—involving the use or attempted use of violence against another person, or conduct endangering or likely to endanger the life or safety of another person or inflicting or likely to inflict severe psychological damage on another person.

● (1750)

The second part of this definition is clearer, as it lists sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon and aggravated sexual assault as serious personal injury offences.

It is important to understand that the opposition parties borrowed a term straight from the dangerous offender regime in order to put limits on a sentence that should only be applied to less dangerous offenders. That created two philosophical approaches for interpreting the definition of serious personal injury in the context of conditional sentencing.

Another issue with the definition of serious personal injury is that it only targets violent offences. The definition of serious personal injury cannot ensure that a conditional sentence will not be used in the case of serious fraud or theft over \$5,000.

The amendments in this bill will ensure that certain non-violent serious offences will still be treated as serious offences, thus avoiding the use of conditional sentencing. The amendments to the conditional sentencing regime proposed in this bill aim to establish clear benchmarks to allow for consistent use of conditional sentencing in order to respect Parliament's intention when it created this sentence.

That is why the bill proposes eliminating the reference to serious personal injury offences and restricting the availability of conditional sentences for all offences for which the maximum term of imprisonment is 14 years or life.

The same will apply to indictable offences punishable by a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment when they result in bodily harm, involve the import, export, trafficking or production of drugs or involve the use of weapons.

When an offence is committed under these circumstances, it is even more important to deter the offender and denounce the crime. This justifies restricting the availability of conditional sentences in such cases. It is possible however that the limits I just described do not cover all offences prosecuted by way of indictment and punishable by a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Therefore, the bill also proposes limiting the availability of conditional sentences for prison breach, criminal harassment, sexual assault, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, abduction of a person under 14, motor vehicle theft, theft over \$5,000, breaking and entering a place other than a dwelling-house, being unlawfully in a dwelling-house, and arson for fraudulent purpose.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, there are technical differences between the changes proposed in this bill and those contained in the former Bill C-16.

For example, Bill C-16 proposed the abolition of conditional sentencing for the offence of luring a child, described in section 172.1. This is no longer on the list of offences that would not be eligible for conditional sentencing, since article 22 of this bill proposes a minimum punishment of imprisonment for a term of one year in the case of an indictable offence, or 90 days in the case of a summary conviction.

Another change from Bill C-16 is that the list of offences that are no longer eligible for conditional sentence includes the new offence of motor vehicle theft, described in section 333.1 of the Criminal Code.

The final change would correct an error that slipped into Bill C-16. That bill did not include the offence of abduction of a person under 14 by a parent or guardian. The intent was, however, to target the offence described in section 281 of the Criminal Code, which has to do with the abduction of a person under 14 by a stranger.

I want to reassure my colleagues that even though the reference in section 742.1 to serious personal injury offences is set to be eliminated, the changes in this bill will ensure that those who are convicted of sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon and aggravated sexual assault will not be eligible if prosecuted by way of indictment.

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● (1755)

Note also that conditional sentencing will no longer be available for persons convicted of sexual assault against a person 16 or under since clause 25 of the bill proposes a minimum sentence of one year when the offence is prosecuted by way of indictment, and 90 days on summary conviction.

This government is addressing the concerns of Canadians who no longer want to see conditional sentences used for serious crimes, whether they are violent crimes or property crimes.

For the reasons I have just mentioned, I urge my fellow members of this House to unanimously support the proposed changes to the conditional sentencing system.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments.

He said that the government is very attentive to Canadians' concerns, but we already know that this bill will cost us billions of dollars that could be invested in the education or health care systems. I think that the government is not very attentive to what is actually of concern to Canadians.

We know that this bill will criminalize and target the people who are already the most marginalized in society, such as youth and people with mental illness. We also know that the first nations represent 10.8% of the population of Canada but 18% of the population of federal prisons.

I would like to hear the hon. member's reaction to these figures, and I would like to know why he wants to pass a bill that will increase the overrepresentation of first nations people in federal prisons.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

Certainly, many people who pass through in the penal system may not have the same mental capacity as an ordinary Canadian citizen. However, methods of defence are available for people who lack this capacity. In addition, it is important to remember that, as painful as it may be for the person who is incarcerated, the prison system has rehabilitation programs. In many cases, the problems that people in the system have were not identified at a young age. It is often once they enter the penal system that they are diagnosed with mental or other problems. In such cases, it is always possible to transfer them to another centre that can help them to become more productive members of society.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a number of years I was the justice critic in the province of Manitoba. When Ottawa makes changes and brings in legislation, quite often it has a profound impact in terms of the budgets at the local and provincial levels governments. That impact is fairly profound on this bill. We have had great difficulty in terms of trying to come to grips with just how much Bill C-10 will cost the taxpayers and how much money the provinces will have to come forward with in order to compensate the bill.

When I was the critic, I was always pretty gung-ho on wanting to prevent crimes from happening. That meant taking those scarce

resources and trying to invest them so that little Johnny, as opposed to getting involved in a gang activity, would be involved in a school activity.

Does the parliamentary secretary have a sense of how much money this will cost the different types of jurisdictions, or can he take this as notice and provide us information on how much, for example, it would cost the province of Manitoba to implement Bill C-10?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I was elected on May 2 and I am not aware, of the hundreds and hundreds of pages that were tabled, of the cost of these systems. I know, in speaking to the hon. minister, that there has been much co-operation between the provinces and the federal government. In fact, many of these bills have been on the order paper and have been debated. The provinces have asked for them to be put in place because they also want their streets to be protected.

I am sure the provinces could perhaps provide a more detailed look at what the cost would be. It appears from their willingness to co-operate that they are more than willing to see these measures put in place so that they, like us, will stand up for Canadians and protect them.

● (1800)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues missing from this debate thus far is the issue of judges and their ability to make rulings and judgments. When mandatory sentencing is present, a lot of the discretionary power that judges have is taken out of their hands.

One of the reasons our justice system works as well as it does is because judges do have discretion. There will be many situations where we must remember that these are actual people appearing before judges and not pieces of paper or machines. Judges need to have that discretion.

Would the member like to make a comment about that issue?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, that is certainly a very relevant question, which was canvassed at length by the Canadian Bar Association and on which it focused.

However, in our role as parliamentarians, we fix maximum sentences, we fix minimum sentences and we give guidance to the courts as to what is appropriate and which crimes are determined to be more heinous than perhaps others. We dictate the severity.

I do not remember the exact year, but not long ago Parliament abolished the death penalty. That was our call as well. Yes, there is a spectrum, but it is Parliament's call to give the courts guidance on where the crime fits with respect to the question of severity.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the honourable member point the House, in any way, shape or form, to a scintilla of evidence that shows that minimum mandates actually contribute to the reduction of crime or repetition of crime?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. Once one is in jail, one certainly does not commit crimes. That is the way in which our streets and our citizens are protected.

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There are two types of dissuasion. There is general dissuasion and there is specific dissuasion. Specific dissuasion is particularly important upon repeat offenders. The sentence is upped, it is made more severe each step of the way and there is no vacation when criminals are in jail. They are not committing crimes or stealing cars.

From the point of view of general deterrence as it relates the question of the issue of the drug bill, we have people flying from Seattle because they would rather be caught in Canada for a drug-related offence because there is no sentence. People who deal with drugs in Canada will go to jail. The people of Canada have spoken on that and that is what we are standing up for. We walk the walk and talk the talk.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the logic he has presented in the House, that basically because young people are overlooked, there are no resources to diagnose or address mental illness, offenders go to jail and their mental illness is addressed there.

It seems to me that this is an argument for prevention and investing in resources, which has not happened in our country. The Conservative government has been as guilty as any government in terms of undermining any ability to address the problem of mental illness among Canadians and Canadian youth.

Perhaps the hon. member can square the circle for me and explain how building more jail and investing more in incarceration will help, while at the same time rehabilitation and efforts to help people with mental illness have been reduced over and over again.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, as I noted, oftentimes issues are identified at a very late stage and many of the entry points where issues of mental problems or perhaps difficulties in coherence are identified are in provincial areas such as schools, in social services and various ports of entry in provincial jurisdictions. Certainly there is work to be done between the federal government and the provincial jurisdictions to identify these issues early. I am sure that in the future we will be willing to work hand in hand with them.

● (1805)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the parliamentary secretary's comments on deterrence.

Before I came to this chamber, I spent 20 years working in the area of criminal justice, where it is very well known that deterrence that actually works is based on the certainty and the swiftness of detection and prosecution.

Why does the government insist on trying to work at the other end of the system where deterrence does not work, rather than investing resources into prosecution and police officers on the street, which actually does have a deterrent effect?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I do not have a perfect answer, but I do know that violent criminals who are in jail do not commit crimes against law-abiding citizens, and that is who we are standing up for.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I often like to do when we stand in the House and have a dialogue and debate among each other about issues of crime and safety in our

country, I like to start with what I think is a bridging set of statements in which we all believe.

I think every member in the House believes in and wants to create policy that keeps our communities safe.

I think every member in the House, legitimately and sincerely, wants to ensure that we have a justice system that is efficient, effective and geared toward the goals that we all hope our justice system would be geared toward, which is to ensure that our justice system accomplishes the goals that it purports to have.

That goal would be twofold, when we combine effective public policy on crime and an effective justice system, and that is to adopt policies that prevent crime as much as we can from happening in the first place and once crime is committed, to do everything we can to ensure that the person committing the crime does not commit it again.

I had the honour of being our party's public safety critic in the last Parliament and spent a good part of almost two years examining, in detail, the situation in our corrections system. I had the distinct honour and privilege of touring some 26 federal correctional institutions and seeing first-hand the work that our correctional officials do every day in our prisons. It also gave me an eye-opening experience into the real situation that was occurring in our federal prisons. I would encourage all members of the House, as members of Parliament, to inspect our federal institutions and learn first-hand what is going on.

A provision in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act specifically gives MPs the untrammelled right to go into our federal institutions and inspect them. As legislators, that is a very important responsibility so we can be supervising, monitoring and inspecting our federal prisons.

I will tell the House what I have noticed in visiting those prisons from my point of view. The people who populate those prisons are, as has been said, among the most marginalized people in society, in general. It is true that there is a small segment of the prison population who are incorrigible, dangerous and violent people for whom we have very little option but to keep locked away from society. Nobody in the House would suggest that the Clifford Olsons and the Paul Bernardos of the world should safely ever be returned to the streets of our country and they should pay a price for the crimes they have committed by being incarcerated for the rest of their lives.

However, we cannot make policy based on that small percentage, because what I also saw was that 80% of the people who are in our federal prisons today, men and women, suffer from an addiction. This figure is widely accepted on all sides of the House. The public safety committee heard expert testimony after expert testimony from corrections officials, from wardens, from the John Howard Society, from the Elizabeth Fry Society, from all manner of people who all agreed with that figure, that 80% suffer from an addiction.

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Another commonly accepted fact on all sides of the House is that there is a substantial number of men and women inside our institutions who suffer from mental illness. Leaving aside, the obvious point is addiction itself is a mental illness. Issues like fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, brain damage, low cognition and those with brain injuries also are disproportionately represented in our prison system.

That leads me to my first point. If we truly want to ensure that when those people come out of prison they do not recommit offences, then we need direct resources at the real problems they face.

It is true that well over 90% of people in our federal institutions will leave those institutions and come back into our communities. They will be walking down our streets, walking down our alleys, sitting beside us in restaurants, applying for jobs. They will be members of our communities.

● (1810)

It is only common sense. It is not only from a moral point of view but it is from a self-interested point of view for us to ensure we do everything possible when we make policy to improve the situations that cause them to commit their crimes in the first place. That is why the New Democratic Party is a consistent voice for putting resources into crime prevention and into resources that address and attack the fundamental causes of these people's criminogenic behaviour where we can do so.

What I see in Bill C-10 is an accumulation of ineffective policies to solve a diminishing problem that is inexorably expensive. I do not see how that will make a noticeable dent in the problem that we have in this country.

At the public safety committee, we asked a person from the United States who is a member of an initiative called right on crime to appear before our committee to tell us about the experience in the United States. The person who came up was the appointee of Ronald Reagan as the original drug enforcement agency czar. He also was the chief architect of the tough on crime policy that has been pursued by the United States over the last two decades.

What he told us was remarkable. He told us that the policies of toughening up sentences and incarcerating more people in the United States by pursuing policies like mandatory minimums, lengthening sentences, taking away judge's discretion and reducing sentencing options for judges has resulted in poor outcomes. He said that it threatened to bankrupt the treasuries of every state in which these policies are being pursued and that it has made no noticeable dent in crime. So, after spending billions and billions of dollars and locking up hundreds of thousands of citizens, the net result was that they were nearing bankruptcy and the crime rate was unaffected.

I said to members opposite in the House at that time that they had the benefit of the justice department and public safety department and that they had access to our civil servants who can access research that one hopes is being done before legislation is being brought before the House. I asked them to tell me the name of one jurisdiction anywhere in the world, a state, a government or a province, where these policies that the government seeks to put into law have resulted in safer communities with lower crime rates.

The answer I received was that there were none. No country could be named. That is instructive. Before we embark on a policy that will cost the Canadian taxpayers billions and billions of dollars, it is instructive and responsible of us as legislators to do our homework and to at least have an even chance of accomplishing the goals that we seek the money to achieve.

Crime is not an issue that is restricted to Canada. Every society in the world is grappling with this, whether it is Europe, Asia, South America or Africa. Crime exists everywhere. This is not a unique situation. We have examples all over the world of different approaches to dealing with crime. We have very harsh approaches, like the current government seeks to take our country in, and we have examples of more lenient approaches.

Surely there is a wealth of information in this world that we can glean from and craft best policies to ensure we accomplish the goals that Canadians want us to accomplish, and that is to ensure we prevent crime as much as we can and to reduce the possibility that somebody will commit a crime a second time.

I want to talk a little bit about police officers because our party, the New Democrats, has been calling, through the last three elections, for the increase of 2,500 police officers in this country. We do believe in putting police officers on Canadian streets and using them properly.

● (1815)

In my view, that means putting them in our communities and having police officers on bikes. Putting them around high-crime areas like sky train stations in my city of Vancouver is an important way that we can improve community safety.

The Conservative Party promised to create 2,500 police officer positions in the 2008 election. I have met with police boards and police chiefs across this country and they all tell me the same thing, that only a fraction of those 2,500 police officer positions have been created. The reason is that the money the federal government promised to give jurisdictions to create those positions has been reduced from ongoing funding, to five-year funding, to three-year funding. Police chiefs have looked the Conservatives in the eyes and said that they are not creating a single position when they only have funding for only three years.

There is no funding for the civilian staff that each police officer position engenders. The money has been transferred to provinces with no strings attached. The provinces have received that money without any obligation to actually create police officer positions and, in some cases, that money or portions of it have disappeared into provincial treasuries' general revenue.

The Conservatives have not fulfilled their promise to Canadians to create those 2,500 police officer positions. I would encourage them to do so because they have unanimity on this side of the House to do that.

Government Orders

If we really want to improve our justice system and reduce crime on our streets, we need to add more prosecutors and judges in this country. Our courts are overburdened. There are cases kicked out of courts across this country every day for want of prosecution and delay. I see nothing in Bill C-10 that adds police officers, judges, prosecutors and nothing that addresses addiction, mental illness and crime prevention. Those are valid, fact-based criticisms of this bill.

I will talk about what I have also seen in our federal prison system. There was a program in our federal prisons called CORCAN which allowed inmates to learn skilled trades and engage in programs like making furniture. The furniture would then be sold to the federal government at reduced prices. It was a win-win situation. It gave underskilled inmates an opportunity to learn soft and hard skills, to learn the discipline of work, to learn skills that would allow them to survive on the outside and maybe have a better chance of escaping the criminal lifestyle. It also gave the federal government much needed equipment at a reduced price.

Do members know what has happened to the CORCAN program? It has been reduced. I am not saying that rhetorically. If people were to go to Kent Institution 90 kilometres outside of Vancouver, they could walk into the CORCAN rooms, which are three big rooms that look like industrial arts labs in junior and senior high schools, and all they will find are storage rooms. They are empty.

The government has closed prison farms. We have had big debates, and I do not intend to open that debate again, but there were prison farms operating at four or five institutions in this country that were absolute models of success. They gave offenders a chance to learn soft skills, to get up in the morning and show up for work. They had responsibilities. The arguments I heard in the House about the closing of the farms were absurd, like those people would never find work on a farm. That is not the point of prison farms. The point of prison farms is to teach skills of responsibility, of working together, of having to show up at the same time every day, working with animals, for hardened people to emotionally reconnect and consider the feelings of other people and learn responsibility. They were very effective programs and the government closed the farms.

This bill is titled "the safe streets and communities act". I think it should more aptly be called "the overcrowded prisons, no crime prevention and overburden taxpayers with no results act". That is just as accurate a title as any other.

• (1820)

I want to talk a little about some of the pieces of Bill C-10. Part of this practice of governing that the Conservative Party has proven a predilection for is to take a whole bunch of unrelated bills and throw them into one great big conglomeration before the House, which is a very imprecise and ineffective way to govern because we then need disentangle all of the pieces, some of which are good, some of which are bad. I want to focus on some of the pieces of this.

I want to talk about the international transfer of offenders provision of the bill.

For many years, Canada has had a provision whereby Canadians who are convicted abroad have the opportunity to apply to serve their sentence in Canada. This is not done just because they want to.

The host jurisdiction must agree, Canada must agree and the offender must agree.

There are criteria and the criteria are that they must satisfy the Canadian authorities that they are not able to access proper rehabilitation services in the country of origin, sometimes because no English or French is spoken, sometimes because there is no rehabilitation programs and sometimes if there is particularly compelling humanitarian and compassionate grounds. We all remember the fellow who was convicted with Conrad Black, his compatriot, who successfully applied and came back to Canada.

There is another important reason that the bill is important for public safety. If a Canadian in the United States finishes his or her sentence, the second after that sentence is completed the individual is deported back to Canada. The individual comes into our country and we have no record of him or her coming and we have no probation and no parole. We do not even know that the individual is in our community.

If the person is actually transferred back to Canada, however, and serves his or her sentence in Canada, we have a record of the sentence and we often will have parole conditions so that when the individual is released from jail we can impose conditions and monitor his or her re-entry into Canadian society. It is actually better for public safety and community safety to have this program.

This bill essentially would gut that program. It would allow the minister to have virtually unparalleled discretion to refuse such a request without any real kind of review. That is not good legislation.

I want to talk briefly about the pardon system.

The New Democrats, not last June but the one before, worked with the government to toughen our pardon system. We are the ones who proposed that we give the National Parole Board the power to deny a pardon in any case in which the administration of justice would be brought into disrepute. We added the provision that someone convicted of manslaughter would be prohibited from obtaining a pardon for 10 years whereas it was 5 years before.

Those are the provisions that would prevent Karla Homolka from getting a pardon, which, under the Conservative government's watch, was going to happen unless we did something. The New Democrats worked with the government to ensure that did not happen.

The government has now come forward with further pardon provisions that are simply unjustifiable. It wants to deny the ability of anybody with more than three convictions from ever in their entire life qualifying for a pardon. We heard evidence before our public safety committee from people in that situation, people who had four convictions or ten. We heard from one who had 26 convictions, and it sounded really bad.

Adjournment Proceedings

The person with 26 convictions had a constructive story. He was a young executive who was recently married and bought a house and his wife developed leukemia and died. He went into depression and he started selling steroids for six months. Over the course of those six months, he engaged in selling steroids over the Internet. When he was convicted, he pled guilty. For every one transaction involving the sale of steroids, he had multiple convictions: possession, trafficking and there were offences because he was selling across the border. He is now an executive with Corus media. He appeared before our committee as a bright, rehabilitated, productive member of our society. This is the kind of person who would be prevented from getting a pardon under this legislation.

The “three strikes and you’re out” approach that has been prevalent in places like California are being repealed in those jurisdictions because they have found that it has put a straitjacket on their justice system. That is not effective and it does not result in better community safety. It is also expensive.

The New Democrats are opposed to this because we want to create effective, strong, rational, fact-based policy that will likely result in safer communities, which, as I said at the beginning of my speech, is the goal of everybody in the House.

I would urge the government to listen to what the experts say, listen to what people across the justice system have to say, and not pursue a blind, ideological approach because it may be good wedge policies, but to actually work together with all members of the House to craft good policy to make our communities and our country safer for everyone.

• (1825)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway demonstrated again with his speech why I have such respect for him and the thoughtful way in which he presents his perspective on criminal justice reform, but I would encourage him to recognize that the approach our government has taken, both in the previous two Parliaments and again in this Parliament, is actually based on a great deal of consideration of the perspectives of provinces and of those who are not necessarily Conservative supporters and voters.

As a matter of fact, in the last Parliament, as the member knows, we eliminated the faint hope clause, we got rid of two-for-one sentencing for criminals, and we established mandatory minimum prison sentences for those who are sexually abusing our kids. We did these, by the way, with the support of the NDP government in Manitoba and, in British Columbia, as he knows, the then solicitor general critic for the NDP, Mike Farnworth, who is now the House leader for the NDP in British Columbia. These are radical right-wing people. Mike Farnworth, I think, would describe himself as a proud socialist, but he recognized the common sense of standing beside those who are victims of crime and not having a litany and a constant focus as a government on only those who are committing the crimes.

I entirely respect the approach that he recommends rhetorically, which is to have a balanced approach as a government, and we do. We have programs. A Chance to Choose is a phenomenal program in my riding that supports kids who are at risk of becoming career criminals, who are without any kind of structure in their lives. We

support those kinds of programs. However, we also believe in making sure that the common-sense approaches to ensuring that we are tough on crime are in fact a part of the government's agenda. That is what this legislation is about.

By the way, Canadians are with us. It is why we have a majority. It is to pass this legislation and to get it done, and we are going to do it.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I respect the thoughtful intervention by my hon. colleague from British Columbia, but I am not sure whether there was a question. I suppose it just reflects a different philosophy of how best to achieve those safe communities that we all want.

For instance, I understand why the Conservatives would have criticized the faint hope clause. They would want someone who has committed murder to serve the full sentence. In general, I agree with that. The reason I supported the faint hope clause is that, as a lawyer myself, I know that a cookie-cutter approach to justice does not work. Often one case with a unique set of circumstances comes up where someone could demonstrate that he or she has earned the right to come back into society. We want there to be that carrot-on-a-stick approach. We want people to have that incentive. Corrections officers have told me it is a good tool for maintaining co-operation and good behaviour in jail when people think that if they behave properly they may have a chance of getting some sort of benefit from it.

These are some of the tough considerations that go into these difficult issues, and I appreciate that they are different perspectives on this matter.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Vancouver Kingsway will have seven minutes remaining in the period for questions and comments when the House next considers this matter.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in my place and look for a few answers to a question I asked on June 8 concerning cuts to DFO.

Before doing that, I would like to thank the people of Cardigan for having faith in me once again and re-electing me to the House of Commons. It is important that I bring to the House the issues that affect the people of Cardigan, but of course this issue affects people right across Canada. The fishing industry is so important to the people of my riding.

There are many concerns in the fishing industry and one of the major concerns is what takes place with respect to midshore seiners.

I would first bring to the attention of the government the edge project which gave 2,500 tonnes of spring stock in herring that would be able to be applied in the fall. The fishermen in my riding and the fishermen in Prince Edward Island are trying to fish herring right now and they cannot catch herring. It is a serious problem if they are trying to make a living. It is nothing to smile about. The fact of the matter is these people need to catch fish in order to make a living and they are not catching them.

When there is a reduction in the funding for DFO, it is very difficult to find out just what effect these kinds of changes have. The government can spend \$90,000 a day and up to \$20 million in order to have consultants tell the government how to put cuts in place, but it is pretty difficult for people involved in the fishing industry or even the people who work where my office is located, in Montague, P.E.I., in the claims processing area to find out that they have no job.

I want the government to look at the economic benefits and how important the safety issues are. Of course, we must have the research capacity in order to ensure we have a strong fishery. The problem economically is when the funding is cut, we have no wharf repair. All across my riding and in places like Avondale, Hants County, and Little Harbour in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, there are a couple of wharves in Atlantic Canada that are starving for dollars. These kinds of things are so important.

Regarding the rationalization program, when the member responds to my question, could he tell me if the rationalization program will continue? Prince Edward Island depends so much on areas 24, 25 and 26A. The fact is that the licences are issued by the Government of Canada. They are owned by the Government of Canada. Many people in my area have invested a lot of dollars in the fishing industry but they just cannot make a living. We need to ensure these dollars are put in place.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to indicate what will be done for the fishermen and people involved in the fishery who have little or no catch. What will happen to the rationalization program? Why would the government reduce or remove the coast guard from Newfoundland and Quebec to Halifax? Newfoundland would seem to be a pretty sensible area to have a coast guard. It is impossible to understand. Why would the government slash the budget when it is so necessary? More dollars are needed in the small-craft harbours for research, safety and to ensure they have the structure in place to enable people to go fishing. I hope the parliamentary secretary will elaborate on these questions.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words about our government's commitment to the fishing industry in Canada.

As my colleague will know from his briefing that the minister offered to him in the spring, we take this responsibility very seriously. Our government has consistently ensured that Fisheries and Oceans Canada has the funding to properly implement the programs and policies for which it is responsible.

Adjournment Proceedings

Since 2006, the annual operating budget for Fisheries and Oceans has seen steady incremental increases each year of approximately \$1.4 billion in 2005-06 to more than \$1.8 billion in 2011-12. This, for example, has helped us address the neglect of harbours and vessels caused by the significant underfunding of the department in the mid-1990s when, I might add, my friend was a member of the government, and at the same time to tackle ongoing and unforeseen challenges, like storm damage.

In addition to annual increases in the department's operating budget, our government injected an additional \$455 million in direct stimulus to Fisheries and Oceans Canada as part of Canada's economic action plan.

As a result, we were able to complete more than 240 repair, maintenance and dredging projects at small craft harbours, procure 98 new vessels for the Canadian Coast Guard, upgrade an additional 40 Coast Guard vessels and enhance 16 laboratories across Canada, among other projects.

The economic action plan did what it was intended to do: provide short-term economic stimulus and target important projects across the country.

We now have the opportunity to take stock of our departmental programs to ensure we are continuing to respond to the priorities of Canadians. We must ensure our programs, like those in every department of government, are efficient, effective and achieving the expected results for Canadians.

That is what the strategic review process has been all about. Under strategic review, Fisheries and Oceans Canada worked to identify ways to continue its transformation toward a streamlined, efficient and responsive department.

Modernizing fisheries management, adopting new technologies and eliminating duplicative work are ways the department can focus on its core mandate and ultimately spend Canadians' tax dollars more wisely.

The department did not undertake this process lightly. Every change proposed was carefully considered and designed to improve the work we do and the services we provide.

Our government will build on recent achievements to promote the best interests of long-term, viable fisheries that are both ecologically and economically sound for future generations to enjoy, fisheries that are characterized by stability, predictability, transparency and trust.

I know that some reports have focused on the potential impact of the budgetary measures on our workforce, so I will say this. We estimate that a very small percentage of employees could be affected over three years and our goal is to address this reduction to the greatest extent possible through attrition, reassignment, relocation, planned retirement and other staffing mechanisms.

Adjournment Proceedings

Once the details are finalized, managers will talk to employees who are affected. We owe it to employees to speak with them before making details public. We will make every effort to identify re-employment opportunities within Fisheries and Oceans or other federal departments.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is at an important juncture. The minister and I are committed to working hard, consulting with stakeholders, getting as much information as we can and making decisions that are in the best interests of the long-term economic prosperity of the fishing industry in Canada.

● (1835)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague, who I know quite well, is concerned about the fishery.

I have one example in the Malpeque Harbour where a boat went aground. The boat was lost but the lives were saved. However, when dollars are taken out of DFO and when the capacity and manpower of the Coast Guard is reduced, and I would like the member to indicate whether they will be reduced or not, not only does it endanger the fishermen but the Coast Guard expertise is not there when needed to ensure that lives are saved.

It is important that we keep the infrastructure in place, that we have the dollars for the dredging and that we have the Coast Guard fully equipped, instead of being reduced which is the case now. I hope my hon. colleague will elaborate on that.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the minister has answered this a number of times. He said that the on-the-water service that the Canadian Coast Guard provides will not be affected.

However, I hope my colleague agrees with the main point that taking opportunities to review a department's expenditures is an important practice because it forces one to look at every dollar of expenditure in light of the bigger picture. That is what we have done.

Over the next few years, this is what this will mean. We will see accelerated progress toward a more modern, economically and ecologically sustainable fishing industry. We will see regulatory practices that are characterized by clear rules, consistently applied, bringing predictability to stakeholders. It will mean programs and services that are better aligned with priorities, more efficient, relevant and better designed to take advantage of modern technologies.

That is a worthwhile destination and I encourage my friend from Cardigan to support us as we work hard to get there.

● (1840)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to speak and have a debate on the question that I asked in June.

I stated that despite the Canada Revenue Agency giving itself A grades on service to taxpayers, an internal audit found that these grades were in fact inflated by almost 20% and fell well below acceptable standards. I asked the minister to please explain this lack of accountability to Canadian taxpayers, who have the right to expect timely and respectful service. It seems like a reasonable question.

The CRA falsifying their own audit is really tied into bad service that affects individuals and especially small business tax filers. In fact, on my recent tour of small businesses in rural British Columbia I heard that small businesses are being left out by the government and that the complexity of tax filing and administrative reporting is a nightmare. A vast array of administrative charges that affect them are announced in budget after budget, which the government then does not implement in their implementation bills, or if they do, they then do not come into force. Those small businesses that can afford professional advisers are spending a lot of time and money on a complicated system set in place by the government's ineffectiveness and mismanagement.

One would think that the response to me would have been that this is an important issue and that the government would look into it. However, that was not what I received as a response. In fact, the minister at the time claimed that an important example of how the government was doing just fine with respect to my question was the taxpayer bill of rights and the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman.

Well, there has been very strong comment among those who work with those two offices in that they are completely ineffective. I will read from an article in the *National Post* by Mr. Drache, a Quebec-based lawyer, entitled "Taxpayers' Bill of Rights a weak publicity stunt".

The writer talked about the community being "underwhelmed" by the announcement of a Taxpayer Bill of Rights, "because we've seen it all before".

In 1983 the Conservatives latched onto a hot issue: abuses by Revenue Canada. They then stoked the public's outrage about that and then proceeded to do nothing about it. It was a public relations stunt.

This is another public relations stunt. The ombudsman's office lacks teeth and is not a benefit to the taxpayers, especially to small business people who are struggling to fulfill their responsibilities in job creation and stoking the engine of our faltering economy. They need help. They do not need just platitudes from the government.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly delighted to have the opportunity to give more extensive discussion to this very important question and I thank my colleague for the intervention.

This question was asked of the minister in June of this year. The member takes a rather negative view of the report; however, we welcome these findings, as they provide an opportunity to make efficient and effective program improvements that will support the agency's focus on GST and HST.

Adjournment Proceedings

I do want to note again that the audit found that controls currently in place support the responsibilities and activities of the GST-HST rulings program, which includes the provision of accurate and consistent rulings and interpretations. It revealed that functional support to field offices is strong, and working relationships with internal and external stakeholders are well established and effective.

The audit also identified that controls relating to planning, forecasting and the allocation of resources should be strengthened.

I can share with my colleague that in response to CRA's own internal audit, the agency has taken a number of steps to address the issues identified.

These measures include the establishment of collaborative working groups to examine and recommend appropriate changes regarding issues related to workload management, quality monitoring and outreach; consultation with the strategy and integration branch to ensure consistency of GST-HST rulings external service standards with other CRA programs and corporate practices; and ongoing monitoring of GST-HST technical publications to ensure they remain accurate and up to date.

Our government is very much action oriented, and when potential improvements are identified, we move quickly. I believe this is part of the reason that in May of this year, Canadians chose to give us a strong, stable majority government.

Canadians gave us a mandate to focus on the economy. Creating jobs and growth are issues that really matter to Canadians. We have created over 600,000 net new jobs since the beginning of the recent global economic downturn, and 80% of those are full-time positions.

Just this week the International Monetary Fund forecast that Canada will have the strongest overall economic growth of the G7 countries over the next two years. The IMF praised Canada for our "relatively healthy economic fundamentals" and our "sounder fiscal and financial position".

While these are encouraging signs, Canada is not immune from the economic turbulence facing the global economy, especially in Europe and the United States. That is why we need to stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

I do want to quickly make note of the red tape reduction commission, which has support from the CFIB. The hon. member talked about talking with small businesses. We have talked with small businesses across the country, and they have made some great suggestions. They are very positive. It is a process that is going to really move forward in terms of great results for small and medium-sized businesses in Canada.

I invite the member to support our government and help us implement these very important measures for Canada.

● (1845)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for mentioning the red tape reduction as a process, because so far it is all process and no action. That is not good enough for small businesses.

The member talked about HST-GST. That is another case where the government disassociated itself from its own actions. The Conservative Prime Minister gave British Columbia a take it or leave it ultimatum, giving that province no time to consult and leading to the disaster that we have today, which is falling squarely on small businesses that will have to adapt to a whole new tax structure.

The government cherry-picks the facts and figures around the economy and fails to reveal the reports that are negative about how Canada is doing, and they are there.

[Translation]

Canadian taxpayers are not naive and they are not stupid. The government must stop treating them that way. When the government says one thing and does another, people become cynical.

How can Canadians believe in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I must interrupt the member, as her time has expired.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the third party for taking an interest this evening.

Our government is committed to the fair and equitable tax treatment of all Canadians. That is why we have created the taxpayer bill of rights, along with the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman. That is also why we mandate government agencies like CRA to conduct internal audits.

Internal auditing is in place in order to keep the agency accountable and to ensure that service to Canadians is constantly improving. Audits generally result in change, and change leads to improved services for Canadian taxpayers.

While it is obvious we cannot get the third party to share our view that taxes should be lower and that their ideas for massive tax hikes would kill Canadian jobs, surely we can agree that internal auditing is important in order to improve services for Canadians.

● (1850)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to an order made on September 19, 2011.

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 22, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 22, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1005)

[English]

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed from September 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: When this bill was last being debated, the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway had seven minutes left to conclude his remarks. I will give him the floor now.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we were in questions and comments.

The Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech provided by my colleague yesterday.

One of the things that came across my mind as he was articulating was the whole issue which both opposition parties have been raising, which is regarding the costs. There is no doubt a great deal of effort on both the provincial governments and local municipal governments to try to come to grips with the issue of fighting crime.

The idea of trying to invest more resources in those things that are going to prevent crimes from taking place in the first place, such as community policing and after school programs for high-risk offenders, is where priorities should be.

I wonder if the member could provide any information he has in regard to the costs that have been provided for the implementation of this particular bill and the possible impact of those costs on being able to provide other forms of programs that would have more of an impact on preventing crimes.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, there is lot of wisdom in that question. It touches upon a number of issues that reflect the deficiencies in the bill before us.

There is nothing in this bill that deals with prevention. There is nothing in this bill that addresses the need for increased resources to help prevent crimes from happening in the first place.

As I said in my speech yesterday, it is a renowned accepted fact on all sides of this House that 80% of the people in federal institutions suffer from an addiction. I do not think one has to be a criminologist to realize that if we really want to assist people so that they do not commit an offence once they leave prison, it would be wise to put resources into addressing their addiction.

There is not one iota in this omnibus bill, that takes in 10 separate acts, that addresses that matter. It is highly predictable that we will not make a dent in terms of helping those people to not re-offend once they come back to our communities. I have seen statistics that show that a very high percentage of people released from federal prison are returned to prison for breach of conditions. One of the conditions is invariably that they stay away from alcohol and drugs.

Well, if 80% of them are addicts or alcoholics and they are not getting acceptable treatment in prison, it only stands to reason that when they return to the communities they will re-offend again. They get into that revolving door of prison which is very expensive for taxpayers, it is ineffective, and leads to recidivism which everybody on all sides of the House would like to reduce.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill continues a long-standing pattern of disrespect by the government to our judiciary by taking away judicial discretion around sentencing in particular. It is imposing very rigid guidelines, and not just guidelines but legal mandates as to how people would be sentenced, giving no discretion to our judiciary to handle the cases on a case-by-case basis.

Ironically, with regard to the part of the bill that deals with sexual offences against children in particular, we have the very real prospect that those types of criminals will go to jail for shorter periods of time because the government has set mandatory minimums at a very low level in some cases.

I wonder if my colleague could just comment on the history of the government's attitude toward the judiciary and what kind of respect it pays the judiciary.

Government Orders

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, this allows me to expand on something I said in my speech last night. The public safety committee benefited from the testimony and experience of a representative from the United States who represents a group called Right on Crime. The person who testified at committee was the first appointee of Ronald Reagan to the drug enforcement agency and also was a key architect of the tough on crime policy over the last 20 years.

He told the committee that they made clear errors and the errors they made were imposing mandatory minimums and things like “three strikes and you’re out” policies that did nothing but stuff their jails full of prisoners, burden the taxpayers with billions of dollars of unnecessary expenses, and did really nothing to reduce the crime rates in their communities. He testified that states like California and Texas are reversing those trends because they find that they are challenging state treasuries and risking bankruptcy for no real measurable community safety.

Those are key measures that attack judicial discretion. Any mature, intelligent, efficient, effective judicial system will give our judges, who are highly trained and highly skilled, the tools they need in order to render appropriate sentences in each case. For justice to be done, it must be tailored to the individual case. That is what justice is about and the bill is harmful in that respect.

• (1010)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will probably recall in the last Parliament the government telling us that the actual cost of Bill C-25 was going to be \$90 million and later it was updated to \$2 billion, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that the actual cost would be \$9.5 billion over five years.

Could the hon. member tell me why the government will not come clean on the actual costs of justice bills?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the costs of the government's approach to crime have been escalating and are huge. The last Parliament was full of that kind of discussion about how much the bills would cost, and there were estimates and underestimates. As all Canadians and all parliamentarians know, the cost of the government's crime agenda will be in the billions. That is without any doubt whatsoever. No one on the government side will stand and deny that the cost implication will be in the billions.

Also, I hear the Minister of Finance repeatedly attack the Liberals about downloading costs to the provinces in the nineties. That is exactly what the current bills will do as well. They will download costs to the provinces because many of the people who go to jail will be in provincial institutions.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have a chance to speak to Bill C-10.

The legislation before us today fulfills one of our government's strongest commitments made to Canadians, both in the Speech from the Throne and our 2011 election platform, a commitment that we would take action to make our streets and communities safe, and to stand up for victims.

I am very proud of our government's strong record on making families safer. Not only is this what we were elected to do but it is

what we have made a point of doing from the first day we took office back in 2006.

Canadians have spoken loudly and clearly about their expectations from day one as well. They have told us that law enforcement agencies must have the resources they need to make our communities safe; they want the rights of victims, law-abiding Canadians, to be considered first; they want serious offenders to be held accountable by serving sentences that reflect the severity of their crimes; and they want to see action that will help to prevent crimes before they happen.

Our government listens to Canadians, which is why we have delivered in each of these areas.

Our government is making communities safer by giving our police the tools they need to strengthen the protection of victims and law-abiding Canadians. For example, we have hired over 1,000 additional RCMP personnel as part of our effort to combat crime.

We also said that we would provide funding to the provinces and territories to allow them to hire additional police officers. We delivered on that commitment with a one-time \$400 million police officer recruitment fund. I am very pleased to note that Statistics Canada reported last December that the number of police officers across Canada is now at its highest point since 1981. From 2009 there was an increase of almost 2,000 police officers on our streets.

On the legislative side, our government has passed a number of laws to crack down on crime, especially violent crimes. For instance, we have taken steps to champion the rights of victims in the justice system by ensuring offenders serve sentences that reflect the severity of their crimes. Before we passed the Truth in Sentencing Act, serious criminals were receiving two-for-one or sometimes three-for-one credit for time served while in pre-sentence custody. Of course, this was clogging up our provincial remand centres in places like Manitoba where 70% of the prisoners were in fact remand. Once we passed the two-for-one and three-for-one, that of course moved the people out of the provincial system and into the federal penitentiaries.

Our government has passed the Serious Time for the Most Serious Crime Act to ensure first-degree murderers serve their life sentences of 25 years without the possibility of early parole through the so-called “faint hope clause”. Our government also passed reasonable measures to ensure that convicted con artists, fraudsters, and drug traffickers cannot be released onto our streets after serving just one-sixth of their prison sentences. This was unacceptable to Canadians and our government has taken action. I want to specifically point out the assistance that was provided by the Bloc Québécois in assisting us in passing that in a minority Parliament.

Government Orders

The measures I have listed thus far are but a few examples of our efforts to keep communities safer, give police the tools to fight crime, and assert the rights and interests of victims of crime. However, are we finished? Not by a long shot.

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, “Our government will be here for all Canadians—for individuals, for families and for all regions of the country—as together we move Canada forward”. We will continue to be “Here for law-abiding Canadians” since “The Government of Canada has no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens and defend against threats to our national security”.

Victims have a right to be safe from the people who have done them harm and our children have a right to be safe from sex offenders, which is why I am very proud that our government passed legislation to strengthen the national sex offender registry and the national DNA databank, so that all sex offenders are registered with the police. Of course, when the Liberals passed that legislation in 2002, they deliberately put administrative blocks in the way, additional hearings that would have to take place after conviction, with the result that over 40% of those who were supposed to be on the DNA registry and the sex offender registry were not there, simply because of the administrative burdens.

● (1015)

This is typical of Liberal legislation. The Liberals try to appease the voice of victims by bringing forward legislation while ensuring that the legislation cannot accomplish what it was set out to do through the use of administrative hurdles. Therefore, it discourages Crown attorneys, courts and police officers from actually proceeding with those additional hearings.

What we have done is made those registries automatic upon conviction, which is only proper. Anyone who has been convicted of a serious offence should be on the registry.

Tackling crime on all fronts remains a key priority for the government, as it is for all Canadians. This is why I am proud to support the legislation before us today as it builds upon our government's already impressive track record of cracking down on crime and standing up for victims. Indeed, one important component of Bill C-10 involves standing up for victims and specifically victims of terrorism.

The bill proposes a fair and balanced approach in allowing victims of terrorism to seek redress. First and foremost, the proposed legislation would allow any victim of terrorism to sue the perpetrators of terrorism and their supporters. The bill would allow these victims to seek redress for a terrorist act that occurred on or after January 1, 1985.

I also want to emphasize that Bill C-10 would allow victims to sue supporters of terrorism. This is crucial because we all know that terrorist organizations rely on financial support to operate. By targeting such supporters, the legislation would become yet another important tool in our fight against terrorism.

Since the target of legitimate lawsuits could include certain states known to support terrorism, the proposed government legislation contains provisions to amend the State Immunity Act. Specifically, it

would authorize the government to create a list of states that could be sued for their role in supporting perpetrators of terrorism.

Bill C-10 strikes the right balance. It addresses the needs of victims for redress against perpetrators and supporters of terrorism while preserving the important international relations that Canada enjoys.

From its first day in office, this government has been working to ensure that law-abiding Canadian families feel safe and secure in their streets and communities. With Bill C-10 it is taking the next logical step in the fight against terrorism. We are giving victims not only a voice but a legal means to seek justice against those who cause them harm.

In addition to proposing measures to stand up for the victims of crime, Bill C-10 would also introduce reasonable and balanced provisions to help ensure that offenders are fully held accountable for their crimes.

In 2010, our government passed important legislation to provide the Parole Board of Canada the discretion to refuse a pardon in some cases.

Bill C-10 would further strengthen reforms to the current system of pardons in this country in a number of ways.

First, it proposes to replace the term “pardon” with the more appropriate designation of “record suspension”. This would better reflect what is actually taking place.

We need to be clear about what this mechanism would and would not do. We believe the term “record suspension” better reflects the purpose of the legislation, that being to close off general access to a criminal record in appropriate cases as opposed to expressing forgiveness for the offence. After all, it is up to the victims to decide whether or not to forgive the criminals who have abused them, not the government.

This change in terminology is an important one in terms of reinforcing the role of this legislation and eliminating pardons for serious crimes.

Second, the government is clear in Bill C-10 that eligibility for a record suspension would be more restrictive. Bill C-10 would ensure that no one convicted of committing a sexual offence against a child would be eligible for a record suspension.

There are some crimes which should never have the opportunity to be sealed. We believe that sexual offences against children is one of them. Unlike members of the New Democratic Party, we do not believe that those who sexually abuse children should be able to hide their criminal records.

On top of this, individuals convicted of more than three indictable offences would not be eligible to apply for a record suspension if they have received a federal sentence for each of those offences. We believe this is a fair balance between those who have committed a few youthful indiscretions and repeat offenders with serious criminal histories.

Government Orders

● (1020)

In addition, the waiting period to apply for a record suspension for summary offences will be increased from three to five years and from five to ten years for indictable offences. However, the reforms we propose will better align the pardon system with the public's expectation for a fair system yet one that distinguishes those who have committed serious crimes and whose records should not be sealed.

As well, Bill C-10 would help to enhance offender responsibility and accountability while strengthening the management of offenders during their incarceration and parole. It would also give victims access to more information about the offenders who have harmed them and modernize disciplinary sanctions for offenders serving their sentences.

Bill C-10 would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to emphasize that the primary purpose of corrections and conditional release is the protection of society. As the House is aware, in 1971 solicitor general Jean-Pierre Goyer stated that rehabilitation would be the first concern of the state rather than public safety. We have seen the justice system turned on its head by that pronouncement and subsequent legislation. Since 2006, our government has been working to turn the justice system right side up by ensuring that the interests of victims and the public are paramount to those of convicted criminals.

Unlike the NDP and the Liberals, the primary purpose we are expounding is in line with key recommendations from the independent review panel that our government established in 2007 to review Correctional Service Canada's operational priorities, strategies and business plan. It is also in line with our commitment to put the interests and safety of law-abiding Canadians first in the justice system.

The amendments before us today would require offenders to conduct themselves in a way that demonstrates respect for other people and their property. As well, they will require all offenders to obey all penitentiary rules and conditions governing their release while also actively participating in the setting and achieving of objectives in their correctional plans.

Since a corrections plan plays a key part in offenders' rehabilitation, Bill C-10 proposes amendments to ensure that a correctional plan is completed for each offender who sets out objectives for behaviour, program participation and the meeting of their court-ordered obligations, such as restitution for victims. As well, Bill C-10 would modernize the system of discipline in federal penitentiaries by addressing disrespectful, intimidating and assaultive behaviours by inmates, including the throwing of bodily substances.

Bill C-10 also proposes to strengthen the management of offenders in their reintegration into society by allowing police officers to arrest offenders who appear to be in violation of their parole without a warrant. Our government is delivering on these changes asked for by police and other criminal justice partners.

Victims have also long requested access to more information on offenders and to have a greater say in the justice system. Bill C-10 would deliver on this in a number of ways. The bill would allow

victims to obtain information on the reasons for a temporary absence, offender transfer, offender program participation and any offender convictions for serious disciplinary offences.

Also, a victim's right to attend and make statements at a Parole Board of Canada hearing would be enshrined in law. As well, in most cases offenders would be prevented from withdrawing their parole applications 14 days or less before a hearing date, which routinely happens and often causes further suffering to victims.

These proposed amendments are balanced and fair. They respect victims and hold offenders accountable.

Finally, Bill C-10 proposes important amendments to the International Transfer of Offenders Act in order to expressly include public safety as a purpose of that act. This would provide a more flexible decision-making framework and would ensure that the protection of society is paramount when the minister is considering an offender's request to be transferred.

I find it amazing that opposition members continually talk about how terrible Canada's prisons are. However, Canadian prisoners convicted abroad continually want to come home and foreigners who are incarcerated in Canadian prisons do not want to leave. That should give the opposition an indication of the relative benefits of being in a Canadian prison.

● (1025)

Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act, will further strengthen our government's already impressive track record of protecting families, standing up for victims and holding offenders to account for their actions. These reforms respond to the needs of Canadian families, victims, law enforcement agencies and many Canadians.

I therefore urge all hon. members to work with the government to ensure that these proposed reforms receive the speedy passage which they deserve.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite spoke about protecting our children from sex offenders, and I agree with him. We must take action to protect our children. We agree on that. However, there is substantial evidence showing that minimum sentences are ineffective as deterrents. Texas, for example, is in the process of backtracking because its minimum sentences are ineffective and costly.

I would like my colleague from Provencher to tell me how he can claim that Bill C-10 will truly protect our children.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the issue of mandatory minimum prison sentences.

We know that an offender in prison is not out committing offences. It is called incapacitation to commit offences. It is a very important aspect of criminal justice.

The American studies indicate that for every year dangerous offenders are out on the streets they commit at least 12 serious offences. Having mandatory minimum prison sentences for dangerous offenders ensures they will not be out victimizing another 12 people.

My colleague fails to understand that while some of the American states do not have mandatory minimum prison sentences they do have sentencing guidelines that are actually used by judges who adjust them up or down accordingly under very strict conditions. Therefore, they in fact do have mandatory minimums.

Another point made to me by the homeland security secretary was that the reason Canadians want to come back to Canada is that they are released on parole after serving one-sixth or one-third of their sentences, whereas when serving sentences in an American federal institution, they receive 15% off for good behaviour. Therefore, time served in the United States is actually real time as opposed to the sentences being imposed here.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear the minister's comments about the relative merits and the attractiveness of Canadian federal prisons.

I am not sure if the minister is aware, but there are many provincial institutions that are absolutely stretched to the max. I was interested to hear that part of the plan to deal with this is to give offenders longer sentences so that they can serve them in federal institutions.

Is that the sum total of the government's plan to deal with overcrowding in provincial institutions or would it fairly compensate the provinces for the impact this would have on the provincial budgets by locking people up longer and putting more people away?

• (1030)

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Every single province supports this legislation. These legislative provisions, including the Truth in Sentencing Act passed last year, were asked for and passed by provincial governments of every political stripe. Therefore, I suggest to those individuals who now stand up and pretend to be speaking on behalf of the provinces to ask their premiers what they said to us in terms of bringing this forward.

In respect of two or three for one credits, lawyers were telling their clients to stay in remand to receive those credits so that once sentenced they would basically be free and out on the streets. The provincial authorities realized this was clogging up their system. For example, 70% of all prisoners in Manitoba were in remand.

This legislation gives no incentive for offenders to remain in provincial institutions. Rather, they would go to trial quickly or plead guilty and receive sentencing so that appropriate programming could be delivered to these sentences.

Government Orders

I would advise the hon. member to ask his premier why that province supports this legislation.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his comments today and his efforts to put more police on the streets.

I constantly hear from people in my riding their concerns about crime. There is a notion that crime is going down. I think it is going down because people are not reporting crime. They do not see the use in doing that.

Statistics Canada reports increases in pornography, firearms, drug offences, criminal harassment and sexual assault. Could the minister talk about the efforts in the bill to specifically address those types of crimes?

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, I note with some interest that members of the NDP laugh when we talk about the issue of crime. They think crime is funny. They may live in safe, secure, gated communities where they do not have to worry about that kind of thing but most people are concerned about crime.

For example, in 2009, in Winnipeg, the violent stuff, sexual assaults, robbery and murder, jumped by 11%. That same category of crime in 2008 went up by 14%. That is 25% in those two years. It is no wonder that an NDP government came to us and asked if we could do something about the legislation.

Those individuals who sit in the luxury of their seats here and perhaps in the luxury of Ottawa may be insulated from crime, or maybe not. Maybe they are insulated from the reality that their constituents are facing. Let them laugh, but it is their premiers who have been asking for this type of legislation. They should go back to their premiers and ask why they wanted this legislation and why we are bringing it forward.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on the comments we heard from the minister regarding the transfer of prisoners.

Members may recall that the Americans sent us a diplomatic note on this issue, and the problem was inconsistency. The problem was that we were not doing our job here. This legislation will not help that. The Americans are telling us to take care of our own and we are saying no.

The minister said that individuals would fulfill their sentence there, but there will be no supervision when they come back to Canada. People here are saying that this would make public safety worse, not better.

I would like to hear the minister's comments on that.

• (1035)

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, only a socialist would say that bringing a dangerous prisoner back to Canada and putting that individual back on the street would be great for public safety.

Government Orders

We are concerned about that relationship with the United States. I had a long conversation with the homeland security secretary and she was not aware of the kind of prisoners the Americans were holding there. Prisoners spend 85% of their time doing federal time and, when they get federal time, as some prisoners might know, it is a long period of time, and they spend most of it down there. The reason they want to come back to Canada is that they can get out on parole after one-sixth or one-third of time spent and then they are back out on the street where they commit more offences and victimize more Canadians.

Appropriate criteria is set out in the bill. I would point out that the Federal Court recently came out with a whole series of decisions saying that the minister has a broad degree of discretion in making these decisions. However, we want to put some more guidelines in place. This legislation would give the exact guidelines that the member is looking for.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister said that we do not understand crime. I was a victim of assault, so I understand the impact of crime.

The government takes expert advice and hires expensive consultants for its financial information. Why does it continue to refuse to listen to experts who have refuted the effectiveness of mandatory sentences and continues to ignore the 20 year trend of decline in the crime rate?

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, last year, there were 2.1 million reported crimes. Statistics Canada indicates that the rate of reported crimes is going down. Reported crimes dropped to about 31% from about 34%.

The point is that many people have simply given up trying to deal with the justice system. What we are doing, as opposed to what the opposition is trying to do, is restoring faith in the criminal justice system. Every individual should be entitled to walk down the street, not just during the day but 24 hours a day. It is our right as Canadians. We have a right to be safe from criminals.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to what is a very complex, complicated bill that is actually being treated without the proper oversight from the government.

We have heard from other members of the House the problem with the bill when it comes to the costs, which is something that is resonating from Canadians. As we hear, the financial crisis is getting worse. In fact, I believe the Minister of Finance right now is speaking to it just outside this place. We have a government that said that the priority would be the economy and yet, at the first opportunity to deal with the economy, what do we see? We see an omnibus bill, which is an ominous bill, that would pass down costs to provinces.

Just yesterday, the Minister of Finance stood and, with great vitriol, said that the government would never do what the previous Liberal government had done, which was to push costs down to the provinces. Well, that is what this bill would do. Billions and billions of dollars in costs would be pushed down to the provinces, be it members' home provinces, or mine, right across the country.

What we do not see is the evidence as to why we need this legislation. What we have is the politics, which is what we have heard time and time again from the government. In fact, since 2006, it has been the brand of the government to get tough on crime, often waiting until the next election and the next election to bring in its legislation because it is also helpful to the Conservatives to manipulate this issue.

There is a lot in the bill. I will touch on a couple of things that are important. I already touched on one in my question to the minister with regard to foreign affairs and the transfer of prisoners. I was interested in the minister's response when I asked him how he was dealing with the fact that we had a diplomatic note sent to us from the United States last year telling us that we needed to take care of the problem of Canadian citizens who are arrested in the United States. The United States told us that we were not taking care of them and that we needed to bring them back to our own country. What do we do? We outsource the problem to the United States in this case.

The reciprocal is interesting. The United States has a convention and a policy that it does not let that happen. We created a diplomatic spat over an issue around whether we will take care of Canadian citizens who are arrested abroad. I could tell many other stories about the problems of Canadian citizens stranded abroad but I will save that for another day.

The point is that, in this legislation, the minister stood just minutes ago and said that we should not worry about it because he would be given, as a minister, a lot of room to interpret and, therefore, be able to deal with the issue. The problem right now is the way in which the minister and the government are interpreting it. Canadians who are arrested in the United States are often left there, and there are inconsistencies. We have percentages from 14% of applications that are actually received and dealt with by the Americans, to upwards of 62% over one year. In other words, there is a total inconsistency in the application for the transfer of prisoners.

Why does that matter? The claim of the government is that this is about public safety. When prisoners finish their time in the United States, they then come back to Canada. We can talk about the situation of prisons there in a minute. However, if the government is concerned about public safety, there is no supervision of those prisoners after. The minister says that we should not worry because that will be taken care of, that at a time when the government is cutting services to do the actual supervision that is required.

Here is the problem. We have the Americans coming to us with a diplomatic note, which, in Foreign Affairs, is substantive. They do not write diplomatic notes every day. It is when there is a problem that cannot be resolved between countries. A diplomatic note raises the red flag to say that we are not doing enough. The response from the government is to basically ignore it and say that the American prisons are much tougher and we would rather they stay there.

• (1040)

The Conservatives have been in power since 2006 and it is saying that they would rather the prisoners stay in the United States because it is a better situation and we want them to stay there and, when they come back, they can just go out on the street without supervision. Talk about cognitive distance. We have it in front of us with this one example of transfer of prisoners.

By the way, it is not just the NDP. I know that does not always sell with my friend across the way as a salient argument. We are talking about diplomats from the United States. We are talking about people who deal with the criminal justice system, the advocates and lawyers, who are saying that this is a real problem that we need to deal with, never mind the people who are trying to deal with crime prevention. The bill fails just on that one piece. It actually undermines our credibility internationally with our best friend and closest neighbour.

I will turn to the issue of taking a stronger stance against perpetrators of terror, which is also in the bill. On the surface, I think we could all agree, it is important that there should be ways of dealing with anyone who is involved in or funding terrorism. It is about preventing terrorism but we have concerns with what the bill would do. We believe this is a valid issue that should be dealt with, no question, but there are some components in the bill that are worthy of putting out.

The bill would create a cause of action that would allow victims of terrorism to sue individuals, organizations and terrorist entities in Canadian courts for loss or damage suffered as a result of terrorist acts as defined in the Criminal Code. Second, it amends the State Immunity Act to remove state immunity for states that are on a list of countries, established by cabinet, that have supported or currently support terrorism. The bill would allow victims to sue foreign states that are on the list.

That sounds fine, and I would say there are some good things in that, but there are significant steps that we need to look at. There are a couple of concerns I want to underline because they are very serious. If we are going to do this, we need to do it right.

The question is whether amending the State Immunity Act would cause retaliation against Canadians. What are the risks? I have not heard from government why it is limiting the cause of action to a certain list of states. This is where we have to focus in. If we just list certain states, then we are saying that it is open for others and we would be defining terrorism in a very limited way. That is where I think the bill needs some work.

Also, there is the question of the merit in extending the cause of action created by the bill to victims in other forms of state violations, such as human rights and torture. Frankly, I would have liked to have seen us fold that in. I believe my colleague from the Liberal Party had legislation to amend the State Immunity Act.

Right now a person can go after someone for economic cause and sue someone in another country, but if they have been tortured, they can not. We have had many cases in this country, the Mr. Arar case being one, where they cannot use our courts to seek justice. It is a human rights issue and it is an issue we need to take on. I have no idea why the government did not include it.

Government Orders

I was happy to support my colleague, the former justice minister in the Liberal government, who brought legislation forward to do that. It is sensible to amend the State Immunity Act for those Canadians who have had the unfortunate experience of being tortured by other governments and sometimes with the complicity and knowledge of our own government. It is absolutely critical that we do that. It is not in the bill and it should be. That is a failing facet of the bill.

It is very interesting to hear the rationale for the omnibus bill. It is along the lines that the government believes it would deal with a perceived problem and sometimes a factual problem. The government's perceived problem is that crime is higher and is getting worse.

Crime is in the eye of the beholder, of those who have suffered as victims, as my colleague said. However, the programs we have in place for reconstructive justice and reconciliation, sadly and bizarrely, are not being funded to the degree they should be.

• (1045)

If we are serious about crime and serious about victims, then we have to be serious about funding those programs. Many of us have talked to victims and some of us are victims. The one thing victims want is justice, but there is no justice in using a hammer to whack a peanut. What we are talking about here is making sure there is justice for victims and making sure there is reconciliation.

I attended a conference in California on HIV and the law, and what is happening in the United States. The spectacle right now is that judges are forcing the State of California to release prisoners. Why? Because the "three strikes and you are out" policy and putting people in jail for drug crimes has failed.

There is a consensus, with the exception of our friends across the way, that the approach used in the war on drugs was an abysmal failure. Why? Ask people like Newt Gingrich. My goodness, I never thought I would use him for validation, but it turns out he is now. God bless him, Newt Gingrich now says not to do what they did because it is costly and ineffective.

California has privatized its prisons. It has more prisoners than it can handle. Judges are forcing the state to release prisoners. California has absolutely no programs in the prisons to deal with treating addictions, which we all know is a major problem in our prisons and the U.S. prisons. What are we going to do? It turns out we are going to adopt its failed policy.

I would plead with Canadians to hold their members of Parliament to account on this because it is going to cost us more. There is the economic argument regarding downloading all the costs to provinces which right now have difficulty withstanding the costs associated with education, health, et cetera. There is the question of justice. Does this work? The evidence is pretty clear in other jurisdictions that it does not.

Government Orders

Then there is the question of politics. I have sensed a change in this country around why governments and politicians are using issues as important as justice and criminal justice for political gain. We only need to look at the government's talking points. Government members are not citing evidence from peer-reviewed studies; they are saying they have received a mandate so it is a blank cheque and they can do what they want.

It is very important that we look at this issue carefully. If the prisons are full of people who need help, they need to be given supports. Victims need justice, but we will not find it in the bill to the extent that it should be.

We do see little parcels of politics, such as, if the government wants to give the notion that things are really bad, it says that it is going to crack down. It is going to make sure that judges are not allowed to look at the circumstances, and instead it will direct them. The government will make sure that more prisons are built because that is its idea of justice. The government will make sure in the transfer of prisoners to keep them in the United States because the U.S. is tougher on crime; or on something as important as the State Immunity Act, it will not fold in the whole issue when it comes to victims of torture and other human rights abuses.

I wonder whether Canadians see in this legislation any change in politics that they were hoping to see, such as looking at the problem from an evidence-based point of view. If the evidence is such that crime has changed, and I acknowledge that, the indications are it is lower. Let us look at how to prevent crime and get smart on crime. This tough on crime idea is to put people in jail for longer and bring in mandatory minimum sentences. To be smart on crime, which is the way to go, is to look at preventing crime.

• (1050)

In many of the downtown core ridings in many of the cities across the country, the programs to help youth at risk are themselves at risk. I am thinking of recreation programs, arts programs, access for kids from lower income families to things to which middle-class families and families of better means can afford to send their kids. These programs have been cut.

Part of prevention is to make sure there is equity of access for kids. As a teacher who taught in a downtown school, I know what happens when kids do not have access to recreation, the arts, et cetera. They are given fewer choices and less opportunity. If we invested more of our dollars into prevention and opportunity for our kids, we would not have to worry about what will happen later in their lives. We would be able to prevent crime.

It goes without saying that when we look at prevention and reconciliation in the case of victims, we would be able to deal with crime in a strategic way, not a political way. Over the last couple of years, the framework that has been set in this country is that we will deal with crime in an overtly political way, which is unfortunate. It is unfortunate for victims. It is unfortunate for those who for many different reasons find themselves before the criminal justice system.

I want to finish my comments by underlining something that is a crisis in the United States, but we must not be arrogant because we have a similar problem and challenge. There is a disproportionate number of African Americans in the U.S. prison system. That is not

news. It is a disturbing trend that has been going on for many years. We must not be arrogant about it in our country, because we have a similar challenge, and that is the disproportionate number of first nations people in our prisons.

Like many members in this place, I was very proud when we acknowledged the issue of what happened in the residential schools. That acknowledgement was a proud moment for Canada, but what did those words mean? If there is a disproportionate number of first nations, aboriginal and Inuit people in our prisons and we have not acknowledged why they are there, we are simply treating them in the same manner as is happening in the United States, as people who broke the law and let us just send them to jail. We have not only failed in terms of dealing with the situation on the ground, but we also have turned our backs to the spirit of what that reconciliation was supposed to be about in the House of Commons a couple of years ago.

On the issue of crime and justice, we need more justice. We need more prevention. We need to make sure that we honour our treaties with our allies in the United States. When it comes to looking at the State Immunity Act and making sure that we acknowledge that it needs to be amended, we have to take in the issue of torture, we have to take in the issue of human rights. If we do not do that, then we will have failed in that opportunity as well.

I hope Canadians will get in touch with their members of Parliament regarding what the government is doing on this issue. The costs are financial. This is about dealing with an issue which all Canadians are seized with, but doing it in an intelligent manner, based on evidence and making sure we take what I believe is an overtly political agenda out of an extremely important issue. We need to deal with it in a sensible manner for all of our citizens and all our constituents.

• (1055)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on a good speech and a good analysis of the bill.

He touched upon the cost of the bill. We have had some discussion about that. There is also the cost of not doing crime prevention.

Crime prevention is critical to lowering the rates and making sure people get back on the right track for those who had committed small crimes. I used to run a youth program, and we had a 90% success rate when there was intervention. They had a job. They had hope and opportunity. They went back to school.

I want to ask the member a specific question in terms of crime prevention. Windsor has the largest border crossing in Canada and North America, and our customs facility is being moved to Fort Erie, nearly 400 kilometres away. Customs officers will have to phone someone 400 kilometres away to see whether they should move on suspicion of drugs, guns and smuggling, which are the tools for organized crime, tools that inflict a lot of serious problems on people.

That move was motivated by the possibility of cutting a couple of million dollars. There will be a cut of a couple of million dollars and that greater intrusion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that if we are to be smart on crime, we have to invest in the right places, but the government cut in an area where there is a huge need for more resources.

If we are going to be smart on crime, we have to ensure there is the requisite supervision of our borders.

The member is absolutely right. A huge issue is guns coming over the border and we must prevent that. The NDP has called for more resources for the border to be smart on crime. The best way to deal with lowering crime rates is to prevent crime. One way is to ensure there are more resources on the border. The notion that officials at the border have to call someone 400 kilometres away to take action speaks to the lack of logic in the government's action.

Why is the government doing something that would further inflict problems—

The Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the member, but he will have eight minutes to conclude his period of questions and comments at some later time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NEW BRUNSWICK SENIOR BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to salute the Chatham Ironmen on winning the New Brunswick senior baseball championship for 2011. The team defeated the Fredericton Royals in a 3-2 thriller to take the best-of-seven series four games to two. This is the Chatham Ironmen's 10th provincial title, and all in Miramichi are so proud of the team. It will now represent the province of New Brunswick at the senior nationals in Prince George, B.C., in August 2012. Also, Miramichi can be proud of having both the senior and junior Ironmen as baseball champions for 2011.

Congratulations to all the players for an excellent season, with special mention of Greg Morris, long-time coach; Daryl Matthews, manager; Ronnie Hardy and Terry Leggatt, assistant coaches; and Ronnie McCormack, trainer, as well as the fans and volunteers.

Good luck in British Columbia, boys. Go, Ironmen, go.

Statements by Members

• (1100)

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is perhaps no greater evidence of the government's failure on the economy in communities across the country than the silent steel mill of the former Stelco in Hamilton.

When the government approved this takeover by U.S. Steel, a promise was made to protect jobs. We see exactly the opposite happening.

Hundreds of families are losing a breadwinner, and economic hardship is being felt by families throughout the region because the government has failed to act to ensure that U.S. Steel keeps its word. Nine hundred Stelco workers have been locked out for nearly a year because the government is refusing to do what it takes to make companies live up to their commitments. These workers and Stelco pensioners are being held hostage by Stelco because of the government's bad deal.

EI benefits will soon run out. The government must do what is right and extend these benefits and, most importantly, push the company to keep its word. New Democrats stand in solidarity with U.S. Steel workers and with the community. We will continue to speak out until the locks are removed and the workers are able to get back to work.

* * *

WILLIAM GEORGE LESICK

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we pause today in tribute to a former member of the House of Commons who recently passed away. Born in Alberta of immigrant Ukrainian parents, this man contributed to his province and to his country with great distinction in a way that can be best described as truly honourable.

He served Canada in World War II in Europe, helping liberate Holland with the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards. He owned and managed the Beverly Pharmacy. He was elected and served as member of Parliament for Edmonton East and then served as citizenship judge. As a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Norwood Branch, he chaired the Remembrance Day parade at the Beverly cenotaph for many years.

William George Lesick was a war veteran, a member of Parliament, pharmacist, judge, recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal and friend. Bill Lesick, respected for his service to his country in war and peace, will be greatly missed by his family and his many friends.

We will not forget.

*Statements by Members***LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT RESEARCH BRANCH**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through retirement we are losing one of the best from the Library of Parliament's research branch. John Christopher has provided distinguished service to senators, members of the House, and a variety of parliamentary committees for more than four decades.

John's special expertise was on a full range of transportation issues. I cannot even imagine the number of transport committees and topics he has attended to: the Crow rate, the WGTA, railway reviews, airlines, air transport strikes, shipping. If we just name it, he has seen it all.

From a personal perspective, John's service to the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group was beyond the call of duty. His research, advice and documentation of cross-border issues has been superb. His calm presence and cordiality were greatly appreciated by legislators of both countries.

On behalf of us all, a sincere thanks for a job well done.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board issue is a rights issue. When the Canadian Wheat Board was established 90 years ago, it was created respecting the right of farmers to choose to market their grain through the board or not. There was no monopoly. This right was removed in 1942-1943 under the War Measures Act to get cheap grain to feed the war effort in Europe. Sadly, this monopoly was not removed after the war ended. It is unbelievable but true.

Justice was restored years ago for farmers in eastern Canada, but not the west. Our Conservative government is about to change that and will reinstate the fundamental rights of western wheat and grain farmers by ending this monopoly. The Wheat Board will be returned to its original form, which is that of a marketing agency that farmers can choose to use or not.

No one else should choose for western farmers, and from now on, no one will.

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● (1105)

WORLD CARFREE DAY

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to voice my support for World Carfree Day. This event takes place in over 2,000 cities across the world and represents an ever-growing phenomenon of increased environmental awareness.

In my riding in Lachine, Piché Street was closed yesterday to mark the event. Over 150 people took part, including students from six different primary school classes. This day focuses on the importance of public transport, bicycling and walking as ways to ensure environmental sustainability. This is the time to reflect on our use and overuse of the planet's finite resources.

These ecological arguments are powerful, but let us not forget that they are only one side of the coin. Let us use the experience of this

day and seize this opportunity to invest in our public transport systems and make our cities greener, healthier and happier, and to allow Canada to live up to its potential as an environmental leader on the global stage.

Congratulations to all people today who did not use cars.

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FLOODS IN SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to acknowledge the constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain who have suffered loss or damage due to excessive moisture and flooding. Initially there was shock, and then frustration and anxiety. I know it can be heart-wrenching to see one's home suffer the ravages of flooding, to not be able to put in one's crop or to have access roads covered by water.

At the same time, I am pleased to say that we as a government had an immediate response by way of the provincial disaster assistance program, crop insurance, a federal-provincial top-up of \$30 per acre, including the ability for farmers and ranchers to defer their income from cattle sales. When natural disasters strike, we are there to help.

Many constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain have asked for this response, and I am pleased to say that this government acted and delivered. With time, the resilience of our constituents will prevail, and we will continue to be the economic leaders in Saskatchewan and Canada that we are destined to be.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, rather than joining Israel at the negotiation table, the Palestinian Authority will submit a written request for independent statehood at the United Nations. Should it be recognized, it would be the first time in global history that a borderless state will be declared.

I stand in support of our government's long-standing position that the only solution to the current conflict is negotiation between the two parties. A unilateral Palestinian bid for statehood only serves to undermine this process by circumventing Israel as a relevant party. Israel has a right to be recognized as a Jewish state and to exist within safe and secure borders. As the Iranian ambassador to Egypt remarked, the Palestinians' push for full membership as a UN member state is "a step towards wiping out Israel".

I urge the Palestinian Authority to return to talks to conclude a framework agreement on all final status issues. Our Prime Minister has taken a clear stand at the UN to reject this UDI.

I call on members of this House to join our government to condemn this unilateral action. Members should be prepared to consider all options.

* * *

ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Ecology Action Centre on its 40th anniversary of dedicated environmental championship.

The EAC has achieved many things during the last four decades, from preventing the construction of a nuclear plant to a ban on aerial spraying of chemical pesticides and from a moratorium on uranium mining to the active and safe routes to school program.

These successes and many more have been acknowledged with the 2009 Arthur Kroeger Award for public affairs.

The EAC is home to its own Tarred Duck Award, “presented to a group or individual who has caused egregious or widespread damage to the environment”. The proud laureate of 2007 was our own Prime Minister.

The EAC celebrated its anniversary with an unprecedented 40 days of action, with daily events ranging from giving cakes to local environmental groups to the EAC's very own superhero squad, the Green Avengers, taking on the Bluenose Marathon. By the commitment and creativity of its own people, the EAC has reminded everybody that “action” is its middle name.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

M. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, PCC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that, once again, our Conservative government has proven that we remain focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic growth.

The figures released by Statistics Canada this morning indicate that the number of people receiving regular employment insurance benefits fell by 22% compared to July 2010. That number has been dropping for 10 consecutive months now. The number of Canadians filing an initial or renewal claim dropped by 3% compared to the same time last year.

This is because nearly 600,000 jobs have been created since July 2008, including 29,000 full-time jobs in August alone. This only proves, once again, that Canadians made the right choice during the last election when they chose our low-tax plan for job creation.

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• (1110)

REVITALIZATION OF SMALL MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about something that is very important to my region and to me: the decline of our villages and the urgent need for Government of Canada support so that they can take charge of their development.

Statements by Members

Among the nine municipalities in my riding, two are devitalized: Petit-Saguenay and Rivière-Éternité. They each have less than 800 inhabitants and their populations are declining. Their people are also aging, and their financial and administrative capacities are limited.

Small municipalities across Canada are our most precious jewels. They are not asking to be rescued by the federal government. They are asking for support for their various revitalization projects.

The gas tax fund transfers to the municipalities are not a miracle solution when the village gas station is contemplating closing down.

The Government of Canada must keep these villages alive by financially supporting their revitalization projects.

I am calling on the government not to forget small municipalities, which have the lowest demographic weight. If they disappear, important pieces of Canada's history will disappear with them.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the NDP, led by the member for Surrey North, criticized the Safe Streets and Communities Act. He even stated that it was unfair that we are seeking to limit the ability of criminals to get pardons. Sadly, out of touch statements like that are not surprising from the official opposition.

The Safe Streets and Communities Act is reasonable and tough, and it is what Canadian gave us a mandate to do. For example, it stops those who have committed sexual offences against children from getting pardons.

On this side of the House, we believe that often, while a criminal's jail term may end, the suffering caused to his or her victims lasts a lifetime. Canadians have been clear: it is unacceptable to ever forget the harm that child molesters have caused to their victims.

I call on the NDP members to finally put the rights of law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of convicted criminals and support the Safe Streets and Communities Act. It is not too late for them to come to their senses.

* * *

WORLD CARFREE DAY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Carfree Day, a day to encourage people to get out of their cars and cycle, run, walk or take public transit. It is about promoting awareness of alternative forms of transportation, providing an opportunity to break the normal pattern of behaviour, highlighting the public health benefits of active lifestyles and participating in dialogue about the future of our cities.

In Canada, as Canadians travel to school, work or the local store, they should join in solidarity with almost 40 countries and 2,000 cities and towns in thinking about our cities and how they should grow and develop.

Oral Questions

If alternative transport was easy today, tomorrow Canadians should question whether they need to drive two minutes down the road for milk, or whether a walk might be a better, healthier choice.

Let us think about intergenerational and moral responsibility. We must protect the endless future instead of serving the fleeting present.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, exactly one year ago today, the House voted on Bill C-391, a bill that would have ended the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

Instead of representing their voters' wishes, NDP and Liberal MPs turned their backs on their constituents that day and voted to keep the registry. Rather than joining our Conservative government in supporting measures to put those who use firearms to commit crimes behind bars, they stood up for a registry that targets law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters.

Our Conservative government has been absolutely clear about its position. We have to abolish the long gun registry and focus our resources on real criminals.

Thankfully, much has changed in the House in the last year. On May 2 Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to focus on their priorities, which includes ending the long gun registry.

Canadians can rest assured that we will deliver on our promise and that their Conservative MPs will represent their views in the House. We will end the long gun registry once and for all.

* * *

● (1115)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over one billion people on the planet live in extreme poverty. Of these people, 70% are women and girls, representing the poorest of the poor.

In many regions of the world, girls face unique barriers to survival and development simply because they are girls. They are more likely to suffer from malnutrition, to be denied access to education, to be forced into child marriages, to be subject to violence and to be victims of slave labour or trafficking.

On March 24, 2011, a motion was unanimously passed in the House declaring that Canada would lead the effort to have the United Nations declare September 22 as the international day of the girl.

An international day of the girl would focus the world's attention on the importance of girls' rights. It would serve as a foundation for advocacy to ensure that girls get the investment and recognition they deserve, not only as citizens but as powerful agents of change.

Today, September 22, I stand with my colleagues to pay tribute to the girls in our lives, the girls of our great nation and the girls across the globe.

DURBAN

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the events taking place to mark the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban declaration. This event will be used as a platform to single out and demonize Israel, and it will be used to spread anti-Semitic views to a global audience.

I am proud that Canada was the first nation to withdraw from Durban II and that Canada is joining 13 other democracies in not participating in the Durban III hatefest. That is why the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism is speaking at the Perils of Global Intolerance Conference in New York this afternoon, to make our government's position clear to the world.

Canada is committed to the fight against racism. That is why Canada does not, and will not, support the Durban III charade, whose agenda has been usurped by some who seek to promote racism rather than combat it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's inability to effectively manage the economy puts Canada at greater risk of a recession. The markets are tanking. Scotiabank, Moody's and the IMF have issued serious warnings to the government. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are not heeding these warnings. They refuse to see that there is a difference between spending and investing. It is time to invest. It is not time to cut services.

When will the Prime Minister realize this?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this analysis is completely false. I was in New York, and the reality is that the world has great confidence in Canada. However, economic uncertainty is on the rise everywhere in the world as a result of certain difficulties, particularly the sovereign debt of certain countries. Today, Prime Minister Cameron and I put out a letter encouraging world leaders to act in a way that will allow us to continue the global economic recovery.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cuts to public services this year and next year will account for approximately 1% of the GDP. The IMF is saying that cuts of this order will have the same negative effect on the economy. In short, the cuts the Conservatives are making to public services will make a recession even more likely.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada is saying that the government can help the economy by making strategic investments. Why is the government doing the opposite?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's statements are completely false. The reality is that we are trying to save a modest amount of money while making major targeted investments in the Canadian economy to encourage long-term growth. We still have a very stimulating economic policy, a tax policy. This government will continue to manage the economy in a way that has been praised around the world.

● (1120)

[English]

Mrs. Nicole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are refusing to acknowledge Canada's economic challenges. Economists say that the real unemployment rate, which is all Canadians who would work if there were jobs for them, is up to 11%. That is almost two million unemployed Canadians. Today we learned that less than one in three qualify for EI.

Where is the plan to get people back to work?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that unemployment remains too high, the world knows that Canada has one of the best employment job creation records in the industrialized world. I always appreciate ideas from the opposition to improve that, but good ideas do not include raising debt and raising taxes, as that party advocates.

Today, Prime Minister Cameron, I and other world leaders have put out a letter encouraging those leaders around the world, who are in countries that are encouraging global economic uncertainty, to act in a way that will allow us to continue the economic recovery.

The world has great confidence in the policies we are following in Canada. We need to see more of that around the world.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government prefers to boast about doing better than Greece rather than helping the two million unemployed in this country. There is no shortage of projects in which we could invest and create jobs. The Champlain Bridge is a perfect example.

The Minister of Finance knows that investments in infrastructure yield five times the benefits of corporate tax reductions. So what is the government waiting for?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government did not wait. We acted and we acted quickly.

After we took government, we paid down \$37 billion in debt. That is what put us in the position where we could stimulate the economy. What happened with that stimulus? Our country has 600,000 more people working now because of our economic action plan.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two million Canadians who want to work cannot. That represents tens of billions of dollars in lost wages and spending in our domestic economy. That is a tragedy for those families and a real drag on our economy. Putting these Canadians back to work is just the sort of measure that would help solve the government's deficit problem.

Experts and economists agree with the opposition. Why is the government so resistant to sound economic logic? Why is it refusing to act?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, excuse me for confusing sound economic policy with anything the NDP puts forward. That is not exactly the case. In fact, as the Prime Minister has just said, unemployment rates are still too high, but they are 1% below the United States. We put money into this economy to create jobs and that is what is important to Canadians. We continue on job creation and the economy. That is our main focus to ensure that as many Canadians who want to work can have a job.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have both said that if circumstances seem to change from where they were at the time of the budget, they will show flexibility, they will show a willingness to re-engage on job creation and to re-engage on what needs to happen in the economy.

Could the Prime Minister tell me just exactly what it will take to convince the government that in fact circumstances are changing and that now is the time to react to the circumstances about which he has talked?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is not only engaged in the economy, it is our principal priority. That is why Canada has one of the best job creation records in the industrialized world.

Obviously we are concerned about developments and we always look for useful ideas from everyone in terms of how to move our economy forward. I would encourage the leader of the Liberal Party to suggest some of those ideas. After all, the Liberals just ran an election campaign without a single important thing in terms of an economic platform.

● (1125)

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will make a very specific suggestion: that, in the North American security perimeter negotiations, the government promote Canadian interests and seek assurances that the "Buy American" initiative will not discriminate against Canadian companies. It will result in job losses and be very detrimental to the Canadian economy.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to ensure that Canadian interests are protected?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, negotiations about the perimeter are negotiations about our access to the American economy. It is the same thing that the Liberal Party leader is asking for. I urge the Liberal Party to support this very important initiative to guarantee that we have access to the American market.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now know, with great regret, that the Minister of National Defence ordered his search and rescue helicopter to pick him up from his vacation on the Gander River. The response, "It was a demonstration of their capabilities". Even the Conservatives are laughing at that one.

He feels that he is entitled to use vital life-saving equipment for his own personal limousine, and we would like for him to answer to it.

The Prime Minister has suggested that the Chief of the Defence Staff pay back the money for his personal flights. Will the Minister of National Defence do the same, pay back the \$16,000 and apologize?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question from the hon. member, I was in fact in Gander in July of 2010, on a personal visit with friends for which I paid. Three days into the visit I participated in a search and rescue demonstration with 103 Squadron of 9 Wing Gander. I shortened my stay by a day to take part in that demonstration and later flew on to do government business in Ontario.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are all shocked to learn that the Minister of National Defence sees his country's military equipment as his own personal chauffeur service.

The government is paying consultants to tell it how to save money, but the Minister of National Defence used a helicopter, which should be on standby for search and rescue, to pick him up from a personal fishing trip. This helicopter was ordered on the day by his office in Ottawa.

How can the minister possibly justify such an inappropriate use of public funds?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I just explained that I shortened a personal visit to take part in a search and rescue demonstration in Gander.

Had any emergency requirement arisen that would have required search and rescue assets, they would have of course been immediately diverted.

As the member would know, having participated in the parliamentary program with the Canadian Forces, members of Parliament, in fact 20 including himself, took part in search and rescue activities in the past.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, being picked up at a cost of \$16,000 from a fishing camp is not the way to learn how search and rescue helicopters operate.

Average Canadians are being told to tighten their belts, but when it comes to the minister and his department's use of military aircraft, money is apparently no object.

How can we count on this minister to provide leadership on this issue when he himself treats a search and rescue helicopter as private transportation?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work of the Canadian Forces, particularly those who take part in search and rescue.

Canada has a rescue area of responsibility of over 18 million square kilometres of land and sea, the size of continental Europe. Our Canadian Forces and Coast Guard partners respond to more than 8,000 incidents every year, tasking military aircraft for over 1,100 cases, and in fact save on average 1,200 lives each and every year.

I think that as Minister of National Defence I should familiarize myself at every opportunity with the important work of those who perform these daily heroics.

●(1130)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government is planning to make cuts to the Department of National Defence, but it is clear that those at the top will not be affected. While the minister and his staff are gallivanting around the country at taxpayers' expense, departmental staff are being shown the door.

Can the minister tell the House that it will not just be employees who have to tighten their belts?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am very proud of the work of the Canadian Forces. I have observed the work they do in Operation Nanook in the Arctic. I have observed search and rescue activities. I have observed live fire operations, as have members of the opposition who take part in the parliamentary Canadian Forces program.

I can confirm that all government departments are looking at their departments for efficiencies, as Canadians would expect them to do, as Canadians and businesses themselves are doing.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have some advice for the government on how to save money, and I will not be charging \$90,000 a day. It should start by reducing the spending of its own ministers. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom takes commercial flights when visiting other leaders, as he did recently to visit President Obama.

Why do our ministers not walk the talk by cutting their wasteful and extravagant spending, such as the Minister of National Defence's use of a search and rescue helicopter for personal travel?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary program put on by the Canadian Forces every year has the enthusiastic participation of members of Parliament, including members of the opposition.

I note that the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue took part this year in the program that was put on by the air force. I suspect she may have availed herself of a Canadian Forces asset at that time.

Oral Questions

This is a great opportunity for members of Parliament to see first-hand the important, critical, life-saving work that the men and women in uniform perform each and every day on behalf of our country.

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G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Muskoka minister was able to divert \$50 million in border infrastructure to be spent on dubious spending in his riding certainly gave him enormous political clout in the region. It may have even helped secure an election, which would be why he was setting up his meetings in the middle of the campaign.

Will the minister confirm to this House whether or not he used his new-found power and clout to offer anyone a job related to the G8?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is incorrect. As I have said in the past in this House, the facts have not changed. The minister said that the infrastructure money and all the money was spent wisely, and under budget for the people of that riding. It was money very well spent and that is good news in that region.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the song and dance, but this is not a foreign affairs intervention. This is a question regarding the credibility of a minister.

I would like to ask the minister, when he was the minister of health he sent an email to a friend who asked if he would like to be retained by the town. The minister then contacted the mayor who said he would get on it right away. The Muskoka member replied "good stuff".

Will the minister stand in the House and tell us whether or not he thinks this kind of pork barrel, backroom politics is an ethical way to run government?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the opposition will not listen to the good news that was coming out from there. The whole project came in under \$5 million. That is quite substantial. It was done. The Auditor General has looked at it and given a recommendation. Let us move on. It was a good project, let us move on.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives thought that it was a good idea to offer \$90,000 a day on a silver platter to a consulting firm with annual revenues of over \$3 billion. Let us be clear: this \$20 million of public money that is going into the pockets of Deloitte is equivalent to the operating budget of the Club des petits déjeuners du Québec for two years.

Do the Conservatives at least realize how out of touch they are with the priorities and needs of the people?

• (1135)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, private sector advice is a key part of our plan to ensure that Canada does not experience the economic and financial problems that other countries in the world are experiencing.

[English]

It is important to seek advice, not only from the public service but also from private sector experts. We are proud of that. We are proud of the fact that this government focuses on the real issues: jobs for Canadians, economic recovery. That is what we focus on and that is what the opposition should focus on as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Conservatives' enlightening explanations, we have learned that for every \$1 spent on consulting, we expect to save \$200. The way they see it, the more we spend, the more we save. That is not really a logic that I would suggest to Canadian families right now. The reality is that with this amount of money, we could create 450 good jobs that would guarantee good public services.

Today we learned that at Public Works and Government Services Canada alone, consulting fees have doubled and have reached \$1.8 billion.

Has the government lost all control over public spending?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance said yesterday, for every \$1 of spending on outside experts, we expect \$200 of savings.

[English]

It is important that we get that outside advice. It is important that we focus on finding savings, so that we can still be an economy and country that other countries look to for leadership. Our Prime Minister provides leadership not only to this country but worldwide economic leadership and that is because we keep our eye on the ball, unlike the opposition.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, \$90,000 a day for consultants. The citizens of Toronto have seen this movie before and they know what happens when private consultants are hired to find cuts. Toronto paid millions for its consultant report and now arts, recreation centres, child care, transit, even public health are on the chopping block.

We know that members of the government, including the Prime Minister, are good buddies with Toronto's slash and burn mayor. The question is, what kind of essential services are on the chopping block for the government?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a strong mandate from the people of Canada. They want a government to spend within its means. They want to make sure that essential, good services delivered by the Government of Canada continue to be delivered in an efficient and effective manner. That is our mandate from the people of Canada.

We do not want to raise taxes. We do not want to have the kind of spending programs that the opposition members have. We want to deliver high quality services to Canadians and spend within our means. That is our mandate.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the defence minister has blatantly abused his position by using a search and rescue helicopter as a taxi service. While the minister supports slamming the door on the search and rescue sub-centre in St. John's, he did not mind calling upon a search and rescue helicopter to bring home his fresh catch from his personal fishing trip.

Now we learn the minister took a two-hour, \$20,000 jaunt aboard a Challenger jet, just one day before the last federal election campaign, to make a political announcement.

One MP used to say, "Burning jet fuel in the Challenger making phony announcements [is wrong]". Who said that? The current defence minister.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what a member from Newfoundland has against fishing.

With respect to the question of the trip to Gander, I have already explained I was there on a personal trip that I paid for myself. I cut the trip short to take part in a search and rescue demonstration. I went on to make a government announcement later that day.

With respect to Canadian Forces assets, members of Parliament from all parties have taken part in the Canadian Forces parliamentary program, which is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the incredible work that is done by our men and women in uniform.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has been caught, yet again, unable to justify sole sourcing its contract for new jet fighters.

Despite repeated assertions that Canada needs a fifth generation fighter and that the F-35 is the only jet to meet those specifications, the government did not bother waiting to review complete F-18 Super Hornet specs.

Fifth generation is merely a U.S. trademark of Lockheed Martin, not a guarantee of suitability.

Why will the Conservative government not serve both our forces and taxpayers by holding an open competition for the best fighter jet?

● (1140)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2001 Canada participated in the extensive

and rigorous U.S.-led competition process where the two bidders developed and completed prototype aircraft. Partner nations were engaged during the competitive process. This led to the selection of Lockheed Martin as its partner at the joint strike fighter manufacturing of our F-35

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months now the government has been saying that the price per plane for the F-35 is \$75 million.

In light of statements made yesterday, the cost must have gone up to at least \$125 million per plane. This leaves less than \$1 billion for engines, spare parts, training, maintenance, initial suite of weapons, and everything else. The numbers just do not add up.

In light of these new figures, would the Minister of National Defence now agree that the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Congressional budget officer were right all along?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs military aircraft in order to protect our sovereignty. The current CF-18s must be replaced. We have budgeted \$9 billion to purchase F-35s.

Let me be clear. In the last election, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to ensure that the brave men and women of the Canadian armed forces have the tools they need to do their job, and come home safe and sound at the end of their —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There continues to be far too much noise from that end of the chamber, so I am going to ask members down there to pay respect to their colleagues that is due when they are answering a question.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

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TAXATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister claimed that many of the allegations of fraud at the Canadian Revenue Agency date back "more than a decade".

If allegations date back so long, why are we only hearing about them now? The CRA needs to be a credible and trusted agency by all Canadians, not a safe haven for fraudsters.

Could the minister tell this House why the government was sitting on its hands, without conducting a proper investigation?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been conducting proper investigations and the government is co-operating fully with the RCMP into these matters.

We do appreciate this is a very serious issue. We will not tolerate the types of activities that have been alleged.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick of seeing this government blame its predecessors. The Conservatives can certainly ask Canadians to tighten their belts, but the least they can do in return is ensure that public funds are managed responsibly and transparently.

In light of what is happening at the Canada Revenue Agency, why is the minister waiting for the RCMP to investigate before taking real steps to reassure the public?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this matter is in the hands of the RCMP.

As I did say, many of these allegations date back more than a decade. Some of them are now going through the court process and that is why we are reading about them in the media.

I can assure the House that the RCMP and officials at CRA are co-operating fully, and this matter is being investigated.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a tightening of the tax fraud sanctions by the United States will have an impact on one million Canadians. Only a small fraction of people with dual citizenship are aware of these requirements. Law-abiding citizens who are unaware of the new rules should not be treated as fraudsters.

What is the government planning on doing to ensure that Canadians are well informed?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned with this implication on Canadians. The finance minister has raised that concern directly with his counterpart in the United States and strongly expressed our frustration with Canadians being put in this place. We know it is a longstanding act but most Canadians were not aware of their obligations.

● (1145)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new U.S. rules also require all Canadian financial institutions to disclose the personal financial information of Canadian and U.S. citizens directly to the IRS. This will be a costly process that will compromise privacy obviously. The bank account of a pensioner in Canada should not be treated the same way as a bank account of a tax evader in the Cayman Islands.

Will the minister engage with the U.S. government to ensure the privacy of everyday Canadians is protected?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is what the finance minister has actually done. He made sure that our American counterparts were aware of the frustrations and the concern that this did provide to seniors whose savings perhaps could be implicated in this. We were also very clear in stating to them that the penalties imposed in this potential would not be collected by CRA.

Oral Questions

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic growth.

This week, the IMF forecasted Canada's overall economic growth will lead in the G7 over the next two years, an example of our global economic leadership.

Our finance minister will represent Canada at the upcoming G20, IMF and World Bank meetings as world financial leaders meet to discuss the challenges facing the global economy.

Could the Minister of State for Finance please outline what Canada's message will be at these meetings?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, our top priority remains the economic recovery, both at home and abroad. That is why our finance minister is meeting with our global partners to continue the work toward strengthening economic confidence and to promote global economic recovery.

Canada's role is very important. Why? It is important because our experience and our success in implementing Canada's economic plan and our low tax plan to return to balance serves as a very strong and forceful example to other countries.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said he simply wants to optimize our ozone monitoring services. Yet all experts agree that resources are needed to study the ozone layer effectively, and they are worried about the cuts. This past winter, the ozone layer was thinner than ever. Scientists around the globe have praised the existing monitoring programs.

Why is the government jeopardizing this research with cuts to the environmental sector?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the preamble to the question is false.

[English]

I will be very clear. Environment Canada will continue to monitor ozone. The World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre will continue to deliver world-class services.

This government will continue to protect the environment in the most cost effective way as possible.

Oral Questions

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is mortgaging our future. We need this data now more than ever. Climate change is accelerating the thinning of the ozone layer, which, I would remind the minister, is what protects us from harmful UV radiation. I would remind the minister that these ozone monitoring programs are a made-in-Canada solution to an international problem. We should be showcasing them, not shortchanging them.

Why does the minister refuse to be upfront with Canadians about the impacts of his cuts on our environment?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for correcting my flawed French.

I will be very clear. Environment Canada continually reviews its programs, aligning staff and resources where they will have the greatest impact. We will continue to monitor ozone. The World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre will continue to deliver its world-class services.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Keystone pipeline project raises great concerns in both Canada and the United States. In fact, environmental consequences are still unknown and it may lead to an uncontrolled expansion of the tar sands.

At a time when Canada needs a plan for job creation, why is the government ready to sell out Canadian workers and ship thousands of jobs south of the border?

• (1150)

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is concentrating on what matters to Canadians, that is to say, jobs and economic growth.

The fact is that the oil sands are responsible for over 140,000 jobs across Canada. The job number is expected to grow to almost half a million jobs. That is how many jobs the opposition members say no to when they bash Canada abroad.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government refuses to strike a balance between protecting our environment and developing the oil sands.

The unbridled development of the oil sands cannot go on at the expense of our long-term economic and environmental prosperity.

Why is the government giving up our resources and our jobs and getting nothing in return, apart from pollution and unemployment?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition needs to stop knocking Canada's economic growth and start supporting the hundreds of thousands of jobs that depend on the oil sands industry. Employment in Canada is far too important to be used to try to gain some kind of partisan political advantage.

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[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is no friend to the refugee community. We just need

to look at the anti-smuggling bill and how it tried to demonize refugees as a whole.

Today, a family of refugees will be arriving here in Canada. The minister knows them quite well. He is the one who actually deported them. It took a federal court in order to get that family back to Canada.

I look to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism or to the government to do the honourable thing and apologize to the Tabaj family for the harm caused because the government chose to deport this particular family.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows, as do all Canadians, that we have a very fair and just refugee system in this country. In fact, so much so that we ensure that we will improve upon that system with Bill C-11, the refugee reform act, of which every member of the 41st Parliament supported unanimously.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is bragging about Canada's leadership abroad in the area of child and maternal health, but he is refusing to take action here in Canada.

The infant mortality rate in the aboriginal population in Canada is two to four times higher than in the non-aboriginal population.

When will the minister commit to responding to the Health Council of Canada's damning report so that we can better understand and improve the health of aboriginal children and mothers in Canada?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of aboriginal Canadians is a top priority for the government. We have entered into agreements with provinces on child and family services. This is an area where we have agreement between the federal government, the provinces and the territories that there needs to be care and attention paid to this and we are happy to enter into those agreements.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to pretend that he cares about jobs but his inaction tells a different story.

After the last buy America plan, the government pledged to negotiate exemptions for Canada on any similar deals. However, instead, it did nothing, and now we have been shut out again.

When will the government stop playing politics with this issue and start negotiating trade deals that actually protect Canadian jobs?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear and I have been clear. We are focusing on creating on jobs in Canada and removing trade barriers. I raised our concerns regarding the buy America provisions with my counterpart, as well as with the U.S. ambassador to Canada. We will continue to impress upon them that imposing these kinds of trade restrictions is harmful not only to Canada but also to the United States.

● (1155)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what have the Conservatives been doing the last couple of years? They have been sleeping at the switch.

The last time around, by the time the government got involved, Canadian firms got access to \$1.3 billion, 0.5%, of the stimulus program. In return, U.S. companies got access to \$25 billion worth of Canadian contracts. The math just does not add up.

Why is the government bowing to the Americans over and over again instead of putting Canadian procurement and Canadian jobs first?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is pretty rich coming from an individual in a party that actually has a senior member, one of its MPs, contemplating running for the leadership of the party and has a motion before the House calling for the same trade measures to be implemented in Canada. This government is focused on removing trade barriers, not erecting new ones.

We are focused on building the economic prosperity of this country. We are standing up for ordinary, hard-working Canadians. Why are they not?

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POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, *Le Devoir* revealed that the NDP received at least \$85,000 from big unions for its recent convention in Vancouver. Big union representatives paid between \$25,000 and \$35,000 to be sponsors at the last NDP convention. As the opposition clearly knows, union donations of this kind were banned in 2005. It is clearly ignoring what is right just for its own political gain.

Could the minister reiterate the rules and regulations on union donations to political parties because, clearly, the NDP needs a reminder?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that type of behaviour is absolutely unacceptable and breaks Canadian election laws. The Canada Elections Act clearly indicates that corporate and union donations are not allowed. Political parties are required to raise their money through donations from ordinary Canadians.

Elections Canada has been asked to investigate these sponsorships, but the NDP and its union friends should not wait for an investigation to provide transparency.

Oral Questions

We urge the New Democrats to provide full disclosure of all contributions. Canadians deserve to know the full extent to which big unions have been subsidizing the NDP.

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EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great surprise we hear the Conservatives' spin on job creation when the complete opposite is happening in Cape Breton.

Since 2008, when those guys came into power, we have lost 10,000 jobs and the closures of an automotive plant, a pharmaceutical plant, a call centre and now a pulp and paper mill. However, that was not enough. They are going to get rid of 120 Service Canada jobs in Cape Breton.

Why will the minister from Nova Scotia not save some jobs in Cape Breton, get some jobs and not go on his fishing trips paid by the hard-working taxpayers of Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained every day this week, and perhaps the member should focus on what is said here, during the global recession we hired a number of people to help us deal with a spike in applications for employment insurance. The good news is that, thanks to our economic action plan, more Canadians are at work now than before the recession. That means there are fewer EI applications to be processed.

The jobs were temporary. We are respecting taxpayers' money in that regard and that is why there will be fewer employees. They were temporary jobs and they knew it, but we will respect Canadian taxpayers.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Prime Minister that Canadians did not give the Conservative government a mandate to put our veterans on the street, forcing them to use food banks and making them homeless.

Every week we hear about more and more of Canada's heroes being homeless and using food banks. In Alberta, Jonathan Denis, the housing minister, now says that Alberta will pick up the slack where the federal government has failed.

My question is quite simple. Why is the federal government abdicating its responsibility to veterans in our country, having the provinces pick up that responsibility?

Points of Order

• (1200)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only are we working with our partners, but we are taking decisive action to reduce homelessness in our country and among veterans. That is why we have established outreach initiatives in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver to provide assistance to homeless veterans, and also in all our district offices.

I was in Toronto this summer and I could see the action of the Good Shepherd Ministries on the ground in downtown Toronto, and of our officials working hand in hand in the refuge with those people.

We are helping our veterans to transition to civilian life in a seamless manner and we will keep up that work.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadians learned that we were ranked third best country in the world to be a women. This bodes very well for the girls here at home.

Despite progress, girls continue to face barriers that hamper their development. On March 24, the House unanimously passed a motion, brought forward by the Minister for Status of Women, calling on Canada to adopt a resolution proclaiming September 22 International Day of the Girl.

Could the minister update us on Canada's efforts on this important initiative?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the International Day of the Girl will provide a key opportunity to consider girls' rights and raise awareness around the world. There are places in the world where girls are deprived of basic rights only because they were born girls.

We are working successfully with countries around the world, as we submit our proposal to the United Nations in October, to shed light on the discrimination and injustice suffered by girls.

Girls deserve to go to school and to have a full life. With Canada's leadership at the United Nations, we will support girls' rights all over the world.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, the number of affordable housing units has dropped by 17,000. People with access to adequate, affordable and safe housing are far less likely to end up on the street, develop addiction problems or commit crimes. It is called prevention; however, the Conservatives prefer repression.

Rather than imposing additional costs for prisons on the provinces, why does the government not support them by investing in new social housing units?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, we introduced Canada's economic action plan. That is what our government did. To stimulate the economy, we invested a lot of money in the very type of affordable housing to which the hon. member is referring. Fourteen thousand projects were completed, as well as renovations. It is the hon. member's party that voted against all these efforts.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after learning about a \$90,000-a-day contract for advice on where to cut in order to eliminate the deficit, now we have learned that the Conservatives paid nearly \$2 billion to private consultants in 2010-11, and that was in the public works department alone. To add insult to injury, at the beginning of the summer, that department laid off public servants who could have done the job internally for a lot less money.

Will the Minister of Finance continue to justify this wasteful spending by claiming that his government will save \$200 for every dollar spent in the private sector, as he said yesterday and as the President of the Treasury Board maintained today, and that he is going to save \$400 billion a year? Is that what he would have us believe?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is always looking for ways to save taxpayer money. We will ensure that when situations arise where it is cheaper to bring in experts from the outside for the short term, we will do just that. We believe there are cases when contracting outside is cheaper and more flexible than it is to maintain someone on the public payroll.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I have noticed a few times now that when government members on this side of the House speak, government members on the other side tend to make a lot of noise. It is my concern that people watching at home will believe it is NDP members who are making this noise.

I would like to ask the Speaker to suggest that government members allow their own members to be heard during question period.

• (1205)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first opportunity to ask the traditional Thursday question, I want to officially greet my counterpart, the government House leader, and wish him a productive parliamentary session that serves the interest of the public who elected us to improve life in our country.

Since the beginning of the week, the government has assured us that its top priority would be the economy. What we got instead was leftovers from the past few years that the Conservatives have reheated and are dumping on Parliament's plate. The economy was supposed to be their top priority, but instead we got served their law and order agenda.

What is the plan for the rest of this week and next week? Is the agenda going to start reflecting what was meant to be their top priority? I would also like the government House leader to tell us when the first opposition day will be for this fall session.

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the opposition House leader quite astutely noted, our priority is the economy. We saw that already with successes this spring when we introduced a budget that was adopted by the House. We introduced a budget implementation bill with measures like an increase to the old age security payments, which was also adopted by the House. We continue to pursue that economic agenda.

Our other priority is also related to having a sound economy, and that is having safe communities and safe streets by combatting crime. As members know, there is a strong linkage between severe crime and harm to the economy. We obviously want to change that, and this is why we have moved in that direction. That is what we have been debating this week, primarily.

[Translation]

In the next week, our government will continue to move forward with important bills that Canadians elected us to implement. Today we will continue debate on Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act. We will continue to debate that next week until it is dealt with.

[English]

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the House just how long the measures in the safe streets and communities bill have been before this House and the other place. When we tally up all the days since those bills have been introduced, it has been a combined total of 2,700 days since their first introductions. That is almost 20 years of elapsed time that those bills have been before the House in one form or another.

We have already had over 180 speeches given in the House on those bills, important law and order proposals as they are. Unfortunately, right now we are no longer actually debating the safe streets and communities bill; we are technically debating an

Routine Proceedings

opposition motion to delay and obstruct our efforts to tackle crime and get that bill passed.

I urge all members to put aside their parliamentary maneuvers designed to delay and obstruct and give all members the opportunity to vote, once and for all, on the important measures included in the bill.

[Translation]

Tomorrow, we will be debating Bill C-4, the Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act.

[English]

As the Prime Minister stated earlier in the week, the government will be introducing a motion to extend our involvement in the UN-sanctioned NATO-led mission in Libya. I will be scheduling that debate for Monday.

[Translation]

Next Thursday, September 29, will be the first allotted day.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1210)

[English]

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition pertaining to the case of Nicholas Djokich. Mr. Djokich is currently serving a 20-year sentence in a U.S. prison.

The petitioners, numbering over 400, call upon the House of Commons to launch a royal commission of inquiry to investigate the actions of the RCMP in relation to Mr. Djokich's case.

On behalf of the petitioners, I look forward to the government's response.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to the House of Commons. I act on behalf of a great number of citizens by presenting their petition in support of International Day of the Girl.

Their intention is to advocate to ensure girls get the recognition they deserve as citizens and as powerful agents of change within their families, their communities and their nations.

*Government Orders***WEEKLY STATEMENT**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a brief point of order to correct something in the *Hansard* on the Thursday question. I am told I said that all the combined bills for the safe streets and communities act had been before the House, in one shape or another, for a combined total of 2,700 days. The actual total is 7,200 days. That would make it 20 years, as I said. Therefore, it is time to get on with this bill.

* * *

PETITIONS**ASBESTOS**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to present a petition signed by thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon the House of Commons to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than from all other industrial and occupational causes combined.

The petitioners also draw the attention of the House to the fact that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world and that not only is asbestos not banned in Canada, but Canada still spends millions of dollars subsidizing and promoting the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities they live in. They also call upon Parliament to end all government subsidies of asbestos both in Canada and abroad and that the government stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to add my voice to those of my colleagues in support of this crucial piece of legislation that we are debating.

The Safe Streets and Communities Act is comprehensive legislation that will go a long way toward meeting the government's commitment to Canadians that we will protect families, stand up for victims and hold offenders accountable. I am very proud to say that the government has received a strong mandate to deliver on that commitment.

Since first elected in 2006, the government has been taking action to keep families safe. We have been working to stand up for law-abiding Canadians and victims while holding criminals accountable as well as to protect the most vulnerable in society, especially children, from those who would want to do them harm. That is why I am so proud to speak to Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

The legislation before us continues the important work that we have started. It proposes important reforms to the Criminal Code, the State Immunity Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. As well, it proposes to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act.

Bill C-10 addresses a significant number of law and order issues that affect our society. It is wide-ranging and touches on public safety, justice, as well as citizenship and immigration. It includes measures to make the safety and security of Canadians the primary concern when considering whether or not an offender should be transferred back into Canada. It includes measures so that victims of terrorism are able to file an action and seek justice against individuals who carry out terrorist attacks. It includes actions to strengthen the laws around pardons to ensure that repeat offenders of serious crimes and those who commit sexual offences against children are ineligible to apply for a pardon.

It includes provisions to increase the accountability and responsibility of offenders to ensure that they contribute to their own rehabilitation as well as measures that would enshrine in law a victim's rights to make statements at a parole hearing. It also includes reforms that in most cases would prevent offenders from withdrawing their parole applications 14 days or less before a hearing date thus saving victims from unnecessary travel and disruption.

Victims of crime have asked for these changes and the government is delivering them.

I want to point out that we tried to pass bills that would achieve these goals in the last Parliament yet time and again opposition members held them up with their soft-on-crime agenda. Thankfully, Canadians in the riding of Ajax—Pickering and across the country rejected the soft-on-crime mindset of the opposition and elected a majority of Conservative MPs.

The Safe Streets and Communities Act also includes measures that would get tough on child sexual offenders, crack down on illegal drug trafficking and improve the overall efficiency of our judicial system. For example, it proposes to help protect our kids from sexual predators by increasing penalties for sexual offences against children.

It targets organized drug crime by creating tougher sentences for the production and possession of illicit drugs for the purpose of trafficking, which speaks to the grave concern of all parents whose children are directly targeted by drug traffickers. It is a very important piece of the legislation in terms of protecting children from involvement in drug activities. Therefore, I am especially pleased to see that we are getting tough on drug traffickers. I would strongly urge all opposition members, especially those with children, nieces, nephews and/or young people in their lives who should never be involved with drugs, to support this piece of legislation.

The bill aims to protect the public by ensuring that violent and repeat young offenders are held accountable for their actions. Youth sentences would become more proportionate to the severity of the crime. Protection of society would be given due consideration when applying the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I believe parents across the country see this as an important piece of the legislation. It is best for parents to hold their children accountable by ensuring that the consequences match the action, whether minor or severe.

Thankfully, the bill would end the use of conditional sentences or house arrest for serious, violent and property crimes ensuring dangerous criminals would no longer be serving sentences from the comfort of their living rooms.

● (1215)

It also proposes to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to help protect foreign workers who could be at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking or exploitation, such as low-skilled and unskilled labourers. Combined, these measures provide new tools in our effort to build stronger and safer communities.

Last spring our government made a pledge to Canadians to rapidly move forward and introduce comprehensive law-and-order legislation that would strengthen our laws and courts while putting victims' rights at the forefront.

On May 2, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to continue working to build our economy and to focus on keeping our communities safe. We have listened to them and acted on our pledge by introducing this legislation.

In particular, I will spend some time discussing a measure that falls under the purview of public safety, that being the elimination of pardons for serious crimes. Canadians firmly believe that these measures are long overdue, as do I.

These amendments are a natural next step to further strengthening measures contained within the Limiting Pardons for Serious Crimes Act that our government passed last year, which received royal assent in June 2010. That act ensures that anyone convicted of a serious personal injury offence, such as manslaughter, will not be eligible to apply for a pardon before 10 years rather than five. This 10-year ineligibility period also applies to those who have

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committed a sexual offence against a minor and have been prosecuted by indictment.

For those convicted of a sexual offence against a minor and prosecuted by summary conviction, the ineligibility period for a pardon is now five years, whereas it previously was three. That act also provides the Parole Board of Canada with the discretion to determine whether the granting of a pardon would bring the administration of justice into disrepute. To make this determination, the Parole Board is now able to give consideration to the nature and gravity of the offence, the circumstances surrounding its commission and the information related to the applicant's criminal history.

Let me speak to what this legislation in Bill C-10 would do. First and foremost, it proposes to change the term "pardon" to "record suspension" as the word "pardon" implies that the government has forgiven the individual. We firmly believe that it is not the role of the government to forgive someone for his or her crime. That can only come from the victim or the victim's family, certainly not from the government.

Indeed, we are aware that it adds insult to injury when a victim discovers his or her offender has received a pardon. That is another reason why we have proposed changing the term to "record suspension". In addition to being a more accurate and less offensive term to victims, we believe it better reflects how the legal system works. When an individual is granted a pardon, his or her record is not permanently deleted. Rather, it is sealed or, in other words, suspended.

We believe the term "pardon" is misleading and that replacing it with the term "record suspension" in this legislation would clarify that.

Another proposed amendment put forth in this legislation would require the Parole Board of Canada to submit an annual report to Parliament. This report would include statistics on the number of applicants applying for record suspension as well as the number deemed successful.

More importantly, we have proposed amendments regarding who can and cannot apply for a record suspension. We have seen agreement across the board on this issue from victims, victims' rights and community support groups, as well as other Canadians. Individuals convicted of sexual offences against children should never be allowed to apply for a record suspension. We are confident these reforms would be better for victims, would provide better protection for children, and would be better for our Canadian society as a whole.

The government is also proposing that limits be set on how many times offenders can be convicted of serious crimes before becoming ineligible for record suspension. The amendments propose that individuals who have been convicted of more than three indictable offences wherein they have received a sentence of two years or more for each offence be no longer eligible for record suspension.

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• (1220)

I can assure the House that we have gone to great lengths to thoughtfully consider how this amendment would be interpreted and applied in the real world for real people.

It is defined in this way. A person who is convicted of more than three offences and receives a penitentiary length sentence of two years or more for each of these three or more offences would not be eligible to apply for a record suspension.

What does this mean in practice? It means that if an individual is convicted more than three times of a serious crime and sentenced to more than two years in jail for crimes such as a major drug crime or home invasion, that individual would not be eligible to apply for a record suspension.

Suffice it to say that an individual who is convicted of indictable offences on more than three occasions and has received a federal sentence for each has certainly demonstrated a pattern of behaviour that establishes a serious risk that he or she will commit grievous harm to members of our society. The government's view is that the risk and consequences of reoffending are so high that this person's record should never be sealed. We believe that this reflects the views of Canadians as well.

Our government has included these measures in Bill C-10 because we want to ensure that the consequences of truly serious criminal activity cannot be sealed with a pardon. The need to protect public safety must be our primary consideration at all times.

We recognize that not everyone agrees with the number of more than three. We believe that setting the limit at more than three offences, or put another way, four or more offences, is tough yet reasonable.

We have all heard of a young adult making a bad decision one night. That person could end up being convicted of multiple indictable offences. If that were to happen, that individual would have a record for life.

This provision accounts for that possibility. Disqualification would only occur where individuals have been sentenced to two or more years in custody on more than three separate occasions and not one bad night or week in which a number of indictable offences occurred. Therefore, a person making one bad choice would be eligible to seek a record suspension whereas a serious repeat offender would not. That is a very important distinction for the members of the opposition to comprehend and take into consideration.

While passing the Limiting Pardons for Serious Crimes Act in 2010 brought about positive changes, it was only a first step in strengthening Canada's pardon regime. We must now continue with the final steps to complete these important reforms.

These changes would ensure the Parole Board of Canada has the tools it requires to properly consider, order and deny where appropriate, record suspensions for ex-offenders.

These measures would ensure that offenders who have committed sexual offences against children will never be allowed to have their records suspended.

Most importantly, these changes would increase the confidence of Canadians in the corrections and pardon systems.

Our government made a commitment to continue to protect the safety and security of law-abiding Canadians. That is why they gave us that strong mandate on May 2. Canadians deserve to feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods. We are working hard to ensure that they do.

This legislation is too important to be delayed any longer. We must make this a matter of high importance for the sake of victims and their loved ones. Our government has pledged to finish what it has started by moving forward with this bill.

I urge all hon. members on both sides of the House to support and pass this legislation. Let us work together to continue protecting Canadians and the law-abiding citizens that we represent.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I learned that with the Conservative government's omnibus crime bill, mandatory minimum punishments for child rapists would be less severe than for marijuana growers, I was disgusted. It makes no sense that the Conservatives would rather punish marijuana growers than child rapists.

I would like the Conservative member to defend the Conservatives' priorities that child rapists would be less severely punished than marijuana growers.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, the member may possibly have misunderstood some of the terms of this legislation. For example, yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice articulated very clearly the penalties for trafficking marijuana. We are not talking about growing marijuana plants, we are talking about trafficking marijuana, growing it for the sole purpose of trafficking. And there would be additional penalties if offenders were trying to traffic to young people and depending where these offenders would be trafficking.

Certainly, we agree sex offenders, as we said, should not be receiving any kind of record suspension. They certainly need to do the time and there needs to be minimum sentences for them.

As I said in my speech, as a parent, the issue of drugs is such a serious one with young people and marijuana is a gateway drug. There is no question about it. So we have to get tough on those who are trying to traffic and trying to get our young people into drug activity.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any denying the Statistics Canada information that shows that crime rates in this country are falling. Also, I do not think there is any denying that the tough on crime legislation in many American states has failed.

Looking at those two, I would suggest, indisputable facts and realizing that we really cannot manage what we cannot measure, my question for the member opposite is this. Once the Conservatives jam through this piece of legislation, how are they going to be able to measure its effectiveness, given that crime rates are falling and will, in all likelihood, continue to fall? Will their plan be to take credit for the crime rates that are falling anyway as a result of these measures, which have been shown to fail in other jurisdictions?

● (1230)

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, there is a huge gap in the way the opposition looks at crime and how to address crime, and the way that the Conservative government and, I believe, the majority of Canadians look at crime. There seems to be an attitude on the other side of mediocrity, “Let’s just kind of do enough so that we’re maybe seeing some crime rates reduced”.

That is not the way we look at it. We look at a broken justice system where victims have been victimized time and time again with current legislation. We look at a system where prisoners and criminals have been coddled, many times spoiled, and sometimes even almost rewarded for their criminal activity. We promised Canadians that we would change it. I am so proud that we are doing things differently from the Liberals.

So, on the other side, if they want to look at statistics and decide it is just going to be good enough and “Let’s just be mediocre”, I disagree. Let us aim for excellence. We need to ensure our young people are safe. We need to ensure any kind of sexual crime against children is stopped. We need to ensure that pardons for people who have committed serious crimes do not happen.

So, we are going to keep working hard, we are going to aim high, and we are not going to let mediocrity guide us.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L’Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing mediocre about wanting to help people before they become criminals, instead of developing a repressive society.

I have a very specific question for my hon. colleague on the other side. We have a hodgepodge of legislation here that talks about child sexual predators, pardons for serious crimes and drug dealers. These are all very socially complex elements. Each of them requires discussion and reflection regarding the legal, social, ethical, philosophical and even religious aspects.

How can the government justify putting all of that in one big package and preventing Canadians from having a healthy debate on each of these important issues? That is unacceptable. How does my colleague explain that?

[English]

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, again, we need to acknowledge there is a completely different philosophy on how crime is looked at on the opposition side versus the government side. Here, I think, is the stark contrast. There seems to be an aversion to ensuring that sexual predators and drug dealers are in jail. Instead, we hear time and time again that it is complex and that there are so many factors.

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Let me give an example. It seems, though, that the opposition has no problem wanting to put law-abiding gun owners in jail, or farmers who want to sell their wheat in western Canada, or maybe people who do not fill out their census form to the fullest extent that the opposition wants.

There seems to be just this opposite, almost illogical, view of, “Let’s protect and coddle and watch the criminal, and make sure that all of their complex issues are addressed”. When a criminal, a violent offender, is in jail I can guarantee that he or she will not be committing that same violent act again. That is something I know. That is something Canadians know. They have asked us to carry forward and we are going to do it.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague not only for her presentation today but for the amount of work that she has done on a topic that she just touched on a minute ago in terms of the long gun registry.

My question to the member would focus a little bit around the response that she gave to the member opposite, I think it was the member for Charlottetown, regarding the difference in terms of presenting these types of bills. What is the focus on of this bill, is it actually on the criminals or families and victims?

● (1235)

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, the member makes a very important point. So many aspects of this bill are looking at ways in which we can fix and correct some of the mistakes and injustices that have been done to victims through the current legislation.

I would not assume to say that there was any government that purposely did that. I think that sometimes governments can, by making one bad decision after another, come to the place where victims, unfortunately, are not the top priority.

That is something that we want to fix. Sometimes these things are very difficult for the opposition and for different political parties to come to an agreement on.

What is important is that we listen to the people in our ridings, and we listen to the common sense of people on the streets, no matter what their political stripe, in terms of if people commit a crime there should be a penalty and Canadians should be protected, and victims should be protected.

No matter what party we are from, we all believe that victims should be protected and their rights should be top of mind. That is something that this legislation has done. It has done it very thoughtfully. We have tried as much as possible to take some circumstances into consideration, for example, where criminals may have other factors in their lives that have contributed to the downfall and the bad decisions they have made, but never at the cost of protecting communities and Canadians, and never at the cost of victims.

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[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): The bills that have been introduced only deal with crime seen in the news, that is petty crime. The small-time criminals on street corners are not the ones bringing in containers of drugs. They do not have the means to bring in plane loads of illegal substances. They do not launder money around the world. They have not transformed Quebec's construction industry into a corrupt industry. They do not attack the democracy of our provincial, federal and especially municipal governments.

Hard-core criminals are responsible for these crimes. They are the ones who make drugs available on the street. They are the ones who make weapons available on the street. The bills introduced by the Conservatives do not address organized crime. This government has abandoned its mandate to defend Canadians and is quite simply doing some marketing and targeting small-time criminals.

Yes, they are targeting street prostitution. Yes, they are targeting low-level drug pushers. No, they are not protecting Canada from organized crime.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to hear that there is support for getting tough on organized crime, terrorism, large crime, and people who are dealing and committing crimes that are having a serious effect on our country.

It seems like there is this whole attitude of, "Well, let us not worry about the so-called small criminal". I do not know about people in this House, but I think Canadians consider someone who is trying to sell drugs to our children a criminal. It has a serious effect and serious consequence.

Instead of looking at things from a view of not worrying about that, letting them get away with it because there might be some complex factors that affect their lives, we have been very clear with Canadians, and Canadians are supporting us with this mandate, that we are going to move ahead.

The more that we can talk about this, discuss it, and talk about ways to help prevent crime, the more productive it is. However, it is not going to be at the cost of protecting innocent, law-abiding Canadians.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke North.

There is no doubt that every member in the House is committed to the safety of their constituents, their communities and our nation. The framers of our Constitution knew from the start that peace and order is essential for good government.

That said, evidence-based laws are key to peace and order. Sadly, for all its focus on crime and punishment, the government lacks the evidence to support its legislation. With pieces of the legislation having reached committee stage before, members of the House are fully aware that evidence given at committee completely contradicts the Conservative preoccupation with heavy minimum sentences.

I have talked to the chief of police in Guelph, to prosecutors, to correctional officers, and to criminologists. We have read countless evidence-based reports and statistics, and the jury is in. Based on all the evidence, these experts have come to the same conclusion: in

order to be tough on crime, we must first be smart on crime. Locking up everyone is not a smart solution. It makes us dumber on crime.

There are a good number of things that prisons are not. They are not a place where skills are developed. They are not addiction treatment centres. They do not combat the scourge of mental illness and they provide little or no treatment options. A jail cell does not even provide support to victims, except to give them the satisfaction of retribution.

Smart on crime means that instead of spending \$108,000 a year on each and every additional criminal the government insists on incarcerating, that money could go to drug treatment programs in my riding like Stonehenge.

Stonehenge was established 40 years ago. Through the dedication of its staff, managers and donors, this program helps to restore hope and dignity to those afflicted by addiction. It restores lives and livelihoods so that those suffering from substance addiction can once again feel a sense of relevance and dignity, and be productive and successful members of our society. Clients at Stonehenge are from the general public, or are people in conflict with the law diverted to Stonehenge in Guelph for drug treatment. Imagine for a moment how many people could be treated using the \$108,000 annual sum spent on incarcerating a single person suffering from an addiction, a terrible disease.

Smart on crime means developing and funding programs that reduce poverty, create jobs and tackle mental health issues. Jails, under the government, have turned into public housing for individuals with addictions or mental health issues.

Smart on crime means not increasing the rate of recidivism. Even before this bill was tabled, there were prisons in Canada at 200% capacity. Overcrowding has shown to lead to more crime. There is no way anyone on the other side could argue that increasing the number of Canadians incarcerated would be a deterrent or cut down on the crime rate.

What of the costs? The government refused to disclose the cost in the last Parliament and was found in contempt of this great institution. Despite the hundreds of pages the Minister of Justice cited yesterday that were provided to Parliament, he purposely evaded every single question put to him about the cost of this legislation. Applying 2009 forecasts the total cost to the federal and provincial governments by 2016 would be over \$18 billion. Meanwhile, the government has not consulted with the provinces on the additional financial burden they would now shoulder.

Mandatory minimum sentencing is already considered a failed policy in the United States, a nation with an incarceration rate 700% higher than ours per capita. It is illogical for the government to go down this path to satisfy ideological urges. Even in the United States lawmakers are moving away from the “lock them up and throw away the key” mentality that created mega prisons that became crime factories. Experts in the United States came late to the realization that they were spending more on incarcerating citizens than enrolling them in post-secondary education.

As a young lawyer, it fell to me on a couple of occasions to defend one client or another who had, on a lark, or suffering from mental illness or depression, committed a non-violent offence. Remorseful and entirely aware of the impact of their actions and how wrong they were, the judge granted a conditional discharge.

● (1240)

Without the stigma of a criminal record or, in some cases, possible incarceration, these clients were then able to gain admission to university, keep or get a good job, travel across the border and ultimately become the successful contributing members of society they otherwise might not have been.

We must trust our legal professionals, our judges, prosecutors, police and corrections officers, to exercise their judgment on a daily basis. They deal with the law up close and personal. Who are we to presume to know better than they when someone deserves treatments options or diversion from incarceration, a second chance, an opportunity to make something better of themselves, to kick a drug habit, to deal with mental illness, to work in the community and develop skills that will lead to stable employment and a fulfilling life?

Criminal justice is about so much more than just throwing people in jail. It is about recognizing people's circumstances and building programs to help them cope, adjust and manage those things that may otherwise lead to criminal activity.

For all the Conservatives' talk about victims and the terrible costs borne by the victims of crime, the bill is absent of any provision to help them. There is nothing in the bill that deals with the numbers members opposite continue to throw around. Victims cannot be compensated through retribution. An eye for an eye does not make up for a wrong done.

Crime is at its lowest rate in nearly 40 years and yet the government is willing to turn around nearly two generations of decreasing crime rates out of fear and fiction instead of facts, ideology instead of evidence.

My colleague, the hon. member for Charlottetown, put it very succinctly yesterday when he said that the bill was really an act, that it was cosmetic window dressing, rhetoric that was sound in theory but contained little action to address the real problem at its source, investing unnecessary billions of dollars on building unnecessary prisons while crime is receding, instead of investing on crime prevention, social housing, employment assistance, health care and child care, which will create more crime than justice.

Throughout my career as a lawyer and now into my career as a legislator and a representative of my community, I have reviewed the law as a tool to advance the issue of social justice whenever possible.

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While engaged on the committee against family violence and women in crisis or the Wellington-Guelph Housing Authority on great projects like Onward Willow Better Beginnings, Better Futures, or changing Guelph's police response to violence between spouses and changing court sentencing for offenders by ensuring their enrolment in anger management programs, not incarceration, I gained a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding justice issues.

My community of Guelph is a compassionate one. We are top five in Canada for education, number one per capita for volunteers and have an incredibly professional police force. The engagement and care for at-risk members of our community is responsible for Guelph being the safest city in Canada, as identified by Statistics Canada.

Public safety and crime can be a divisive political issue but it does not need to be so long as we listen to the facts and heed our expert evidence. We have an opportunity to be smart on crime and not pass this omnibus bill in its present form.

We do not need to completely ignore painfully learned and carefully documented and researched lessons by treating crime as a black and white issue. There is no strong or weak on crime. That is ideological language used to divide and to provoke misinformation based on fear, anger and misplaced need for revenge.

If more and longer sentences were the answer to increasing public safety, the United States would be the safest country in the world, and it is far from that. Instead, even the most conservative U.S. lawmakers are now turning away from their old approach, while we run ahead on into it.

I implore the government not to continue on this reckless path.

● (1245)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I totally disagree with what the member said in his speech this afternoon.

He talked about compassion and so on. Recently there was a case in British Columbia where a former sex offender was walking the streets and he took a child from his home for days and days. The parents and the families in that community were suffering because they thought the young child was being abused by a sex offender who was a predator on the street.

The bill before us talks about sex offenders and pedophiles. Where is the compassion? What does the member say on that particular issue? Why are the Liberals not supporting the bill to keep those types of people off the street?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member.

I wish the question had been placed this way: Are there any provisions of the legislation that I agree with? I would have said, yes, there are provisions in this legislation that I agree with. Sexual predators is one of the sections that I happen to agree with. Perhaps a trafficker trafficking to children at a school might be one of those sections that I agree with. Luring children is a section that I agree with.

Government Orders

What I disagree with is the ideological commitment to absolute minimum sentences in all circumstances, where the government takes away the discretion of a judge, a lawyer, a crown attorney, a probation officer who has prepared a pre-sentence report and they say, perhaps, that in a minor incident of possession of marijuana plants there is a better solution than to throw the fellow in jail.

The solution is going to a treatment program like that offered at Stonehenge because offenders can be rehabilitated there rather than criminalized by being put in jail.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has touched on an important problem and I would like to hear more from him on this subject.

I am referring to the tendency to establish foolish and specific laws. I have been reading quite a bit about this. This tendency has a significant impact on the legal system and the very discretion of judges who, faced with a crime, must consider why it was committed, whether it was a stupid mistake or whether the offender was compelled to commit it. They must be aware of the context before arriving at a decision. How will it end if we simply apply foolish solutions such as "one plus one equals two" without ever giving judges the freedom they require to analyze cases? I would like to hear more from my colleague on this aspect of the problem.

[English]

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely it. My hon. friend has hit the nail on the head.

By passing this legislation, it will, in many respects, remove the discretion of judges in the courts to look at circumstances on a case-by-case basis. It is a sad society when all people are painted with the same brush; given no opportunity to explain the circumstances from which they come; given no opportunity for rehabilitation, which is not found in our jails; and given no opportunity to pursue a meaningful life because of the criminalization they will face by being put in jail. They are given no opportunity to attend a mental health treatment program when perhaps it was because of a temporary depression that led to the particular offence. Those offenders have no opportunity to receive treatment for it or, as I said, drug treatment or any other incidents that may be appropriate under the circumstances.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am compelled to speak to Bill C-10, a 110-page omnibus bill rolling together nine past proposals, as crime prevention and reduction is of major concern to my constituents.

Before I begin, however, I want to praise Etobicoke North's superintendent, Ron Tavemer, and the officers of 23 Division for their excellent policing and for their outreach to our community, attending numerous community events, building bridges, participating in anti-drug marches, partnering with faith groups and restoring streets through community cleanups.

I also want to recognize the work of organizations, such as the Rexdale legal clinic and the Youth Without Shelter, that work

tirelessly to support those requiring legal services and those requiring a home and a new beginning.

I will now share the story of an extraordinary young man in our community. He has just received three scholarships and is in his first month of college. He is in fact the first one in his family to go to college. He works and has just started an organization to inspire youth to achieve their greatest goals. What few know is that he lives in a youth shelter. He is a remarkable young man who is being celebrated because of his tremendous achievements. In fact, he gave his first public address last week and humbled all those in attendance.

This young man has fought hard for a life following abuse, abandonment and drug use. He is making it today with the necessary supports. He is succeeding and, for the first time in his life, he is part of a family at the shelter and is looking forward to a future.

The point is that we must address the root causes of crime, provide police with the tools they need to do their job effectively, provide necessary deterrents to crime and provide the supports necessary to reduce recidivism, because we all want safe streets and safe communities.

The fundamental question of this debate must therefore be whether this bill would make Canada safer. Would it protect victims who often feel abandoned by the justice system? The reality is that the bill has been highly criticized by criminal lawyers, prisoner advocates and critics as costly, ideological, irresponsible, misguided, and overreaching largely because of falling crime rates and predicted massive costs to taxpayers for prison expansion.

Critics claim that the Conservative government's tough on crime agenda will be fought out in Canadian courts for years to come.

National crime rates are continuing their 20 year decline, reaching levels not seen since 1973. Statistics Canada shows the overall volume of criminal incidents fell by 5% between 2009 and 2010, and the relative severity of the crimes showed a similar decrease. Homicides, attempted murders, serious assaults and robberies were all down last year. Young people were accused of committing fewer offences. Even property crime was reported less frequently, with reductions in both break-ins and car thefts. True leadership would, therefore, provide accurate statistics and reassure Canadians rather than invoke fear to convince them that the bill is for the greater good.

Kim Pate, executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society, said:

We're being encouraged to believe we need this for public safety. It's a farce. If in fact it was true, then the U.S. would be the safest place in the world, the States would not be going bankrupt and they would not be retreating from this agenda.

Others claim that the bill would allow the government to keep a spotlight on what it considers popular law and order measures at a time when economic news is bleak.

• (1255)

The government appears to be focusing on unreported crime as a rationale for its tough-on-crime approach. Unfortunately, it is unclear how tough sentencing for unreported crime will make communities safer. If under-reporting is the issue, perhaps measures should be put in place to address it. However, evidence of crime being unreported is marginal; in fact, there is evidence that reporting of domestic violence has increased, as has reporting from schools, because of police protocols.

Correctional Service Canada estimates the system's operating cost will rise from \$1.6 billion in 2006, when the Conservatives took power, to \$3 billion this fiscal year.

Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page is still trying to obtain comprehensive data on the government's anti-crime agenda. The justice minister has been asked repeatedly about the costs of the bill but has declined to specify the projected costs of the measures or even to reveal the federal government's own projections of increased prison populations.

Criminal defence lawyer John Rosen predicts that there will be many constitutional and legal challenges, especially regarding mandatory minimum penalties. He explained that these penalties violate an accused person's right to fundamental justice. He believes the measures will be judged an inappropriate infringement on the case-by-case analysis that has been mandated by the Supreme Court in sentencing cases. He further explained that the Conservatives are trying to Americanize our system.

The Globe and Mail states that Canada is one of the few jurisdictions worldwide that is headed in the direction of cracking down on crime. The article also states that the tough-on-crime approach in the face of contrary evidence is "bemusing international observers".

Criminologists, judges and policymakers in Australia, Britain and the United States, whose systems for the most part mirror Canada's, have recognized that a jail-intensive approach is counterproductive in reducing crime.

Texas, which had 15 youth incarceration institutions four years ago, is down to six. The executive director of the Youth Commission in Texas said, "There's been a real shift to make sure that we really look at the youth, the seriousness of the offence and the youth's risk to reoffend, and only incarcerate those that are the highest risk in terms of public safety".

Further criticisms of the bill are that scarce resources will be diverted from treating offenders with mental health problems or addictions and that more youth will serve longer jail times, despite evidence showing longer sentences increase the likelihood for youth to reoffend.

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The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and the John Howard Society of Canada said the bill would lead to overcrowded prisons, jeopardize inmates with addictions or mental health problems, divert funding from treatment programs and dissuade sexual assault victims from pursuing charges against assailants who are often related to them.

Defence lawyer Rosen has said that most professionals who work in the justice system, whether corrections officials, defence lawyers, judges, prosecutors or social workers, agree that the goal is not only to suppress crime but to prevent the recurrence of it. The government is gradually strangling all of the social programs that address those issues and address the root causes of crime, while spending money to prosecute.

Had my extraordinary young man been subject to this legislation, he would be living a very different life today. He would not have had a chance to get an education. He would not have had a social worker. He would not have had his family at the shelter. He would not be contributing to society.

I have one last question. What will it take to get the government's attention and to re-evaluate?

• (1300)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we often hear the argument from the other side of the House that if we do not support this bill we are automatically in favour of criminals. That simplistic argument detracts from the real debate. Right now, the protection of the public is not being called into question. That is not at all what we are talking about here. We simply want to know what debate we can have on how to protect the public and improve the quality of life for Canadians. That is what we are actually talking about here.

I would ask my colleague, who made a very interesting speech, whether she is concerned about the fact that the government wants to increase punishment, but that the bill does not mention prevention, education or reintegration of prisoners.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, rehabilitation is fundamental. I would like the House to know that the Canadian Paediatric Society has also expressed disapproval for the bill.

The society reports that changing the youth crime law to allow stiffer sentences for children as young as 14 will have significant negative consequences. The society says the current Youth Criminal Justice Act supports rehabilitation and reintegration instead of putting the emphasis on incarceration, and it recommends that the federal government work with the provincial and territorial governments on youth crime prevention strategies that would include early detection and treatment of behavioural and mental health issues that might lead to criminal activity.

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I will take the example of Texas. In just two years, the focus has been on more education and therapeutic programs and on transitioning back to their home communities so that there is a greater chance for successful re-entry. The result is that youth incarceration rates have been halved in a number of years.

• (1305)

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question on her comments.

I understand from her comments that the Canadian Paediatric Society has approved our bill, the bill that is front of the House as we speak. I am very concerned that she is worried about that, because these are the front-line doctors. These are the people who see children hurt. These are the people who see the ravages of abuse. They see the ravages of sexual abuse on young children.

I am thrilled that the Canadian Paediatric Society is supportive of this bill, because their members are the first line and are able to see that.

Could my hon. colleague please explain why she is concerned with their support? They are the front-line people who see the hurt done to young people.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments.

I will be very clear. Everyone in this House and everyone in Canada wants our most vulnerable, our children, protected.

I will be very clear that the Canadian Paediatric Society has expressed disapproval for the bill and wants the emphasis to be on rehabilitation and reintegration. I think it is really important for that point to be brought out.

I also think it is important to bring evidence here again. I want to bring out that the recent statistics and other surveys simply do not show that we are in a crime wave. Attempted murders are at their lowest levels in 30 years. There has been a 15% drop in auto theft. That is continuing a downward trend that started in the mid-1990s, and last year there were 15,000 fewer youth crimes, a drop of 7%.

Alan Young, a law professor at York University, said that the Conservative vision for criminal justice ran its course 30 years ago. He said they had been there, done it, tried it and failed.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today at the second reading debate on Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts.

Part 2 of the bill proposes sentencing amendments to the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Clause 34 of the bill, within part 2, proposes to restrict the availability of conditional sentences in the same manner as was advanced in former Bill C-16, which had received second reading and had been referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights but had not yet been studied when it died on the order paper at the dissolution of the 40th Parliament.

Conditional sentences are an appropriate sentencing tool in many cases, but not when it comes to serious property crimes and violent offences. Conditional sentences became a sentencing option with the proclamation in September 1996 of Bill C-41, chapter 22 of the Statutes of Canada, 1995. They were created in recognition that many less serious offenders who would otherwise be sentenced to custody could remain among other members of society as long as they adhered to strict and appropriate conditions.

When first introduced, conditional sentences were available if the sentence imposed was less than two years of imprisonment, the offence for which the offender was sentenced was not punishable by a mandatory minimum penalty and the court was satisfied that allowing the offender to serve the sentence of imprisonment in the community would not endanger the safety of that community.

Shortly thereafter, a requirement was added to require the court to be satisfied that sentencing the offender to a conditional sentence of imprisonment would be consistent with the fundamental purpose and principles of sentencing set out in section 718 to 718.2 of the Criminal Code.

Where a conditional sentence is imposed, the effect is that the offender serves his or her sentence in the community with conditions, and sometimes with a condition of house arrest. This new sentencing option generated considerable debate following its creation because it was available at sentencing for any offences not punishable by a minimum sentence, including serious and violent offences, provided that the accused met all the above-mentioned prerequisites. Parliament intended that conditional sentences would be available to non-dangerous offenders who would have been, before the creation of conditional sentences, sentenced to a term of incarceration of less than two years for offences with no minimum term of imprisonment.

In 2000 this debate on certain controversial cases led the Supreme Court of Canada to examine the conditional sentence regime in *R. v. Proulx*. The court explained that a sentencing court must first find that a sentence of imprisonment of less than two years is appropriate before examining the other prerequisites to the availability of conditional sentences.

In other words, a conditional sentence is not on an equal footing with the rest of the sentencing options available at sentencing, because the court must be of the opinion that other non-carceral sentencing options, such as a probation order or a fine, would not adequately address the seriousness of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. It is only in situations in which the court is of the opinion that the term of imprisonment should not be more than two years that a conditional sentence order may be considered, if the court is also satisfied that allowing the offender to serve the sentence in a community would not endanger public safety.

Over the years there has been a loss of public confidence in the appropriateness of conditional sentence orders because of the wide array of offences that received conditional sentences of imprisonment, including offences punishable by the highest maximum in the Criminal Code.

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Our government responded to these concerns by tabling Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment) on May 4, 2006.

Bill C-9, in its original form, proposed to eliminate conditional sentences for offences prosecuted on indictment and punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years or more. It was, and still is, the opinion of this government that offences prosecuted on indictment and punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years, 14 years, or life are serious offences that should never, ever, result in a conditional sentence order.

● (1310)

However, the scope of Bill C-9 was amended in committee to only capture offences that are punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years or more and prosecuted on indictment, that are terrorism offences, organized crime offences, and serious personal injury offences as defined in section 752 of the Criminal Code.

The use of the term “serious personal injury offence” to restrict the availability of conditional sentences has not accomplished the objective of ensuring that conditional sentences are not available for serious crimes. In fact, this approach allows certain serious offences, punishable by a maximum of 10 years’ imprisonment or more, such as robbery, to be eligible for a conditional sentence or house arrest.

As defined in section 752 of the Criminal Code, a serious personal injury offence has two components. First, it specifically includes the three general sexual assault offences in sections 271, 272 and 273 of the code. This is pretty straightforward. The second component of the serious personal injury offence does not provide the same certainty because it includes indictable offences involving the use or attempted use of violence against another person, or conduct endangering or likely to endanger the life or safety of another person, or inflicting or likely to inflict severe psychological damage on another person, and for which the offender may be sentenced to imprisonment for 10 years or more. This calls for interpretation of whether an offence endangered the life or safety of another person or was likely to do so. For some offences this will be clear, but for others it will not be clear.

This government wants to clearly indicate the offences for which a conditional sentence is never an option. This is what the relevant amendments contained in the bill before us address. Rather than leaving it to individual courts to determine whether a particular offence qualifies as a serious personal injury offence, it clearly identifies all offences which should never be eligible for a conditional sentence. It removes all of that uncertainty.

Until the coming into force of Bill C-9 on December 1, 2007, sentencing courts only interpreted “serious personal injury offence” for the purpose of determining whether the threshold for a dangerous or long-term offender application had been met. That is from part XXIV of the Criminal Code. This is because the term had been enacted and defined for the dangerous and long-term offender provisions only.

Since Bill C-9 came into force, courts have had to interpret the definition of “serious personal injury offences” in the context of conditional sentences, a context which is quite different from that for dangerous and long-term offenders. For instance, in the 2009

decision by the Alberta Court of Appeal in *R. v. Ponticorvo*, the court held that serious personal injury in the conditional sentence context included the use, or attempted use, of any violence and was not restricted to only the use of serious violence. In so doing, the court applied a different interpretation than it had to the same term in the dangerous offender context in *R. v. Neve* in 1999.

In 2010 in *R. v. Lebar*, the Ontario Court of Appeal confirmed this approach and concluded that for the purposes of the availability of conditional sentences, Parliament created “a divide between crimes where violence is or is not used, not between crimes of serious violence and less serious violence”. That is in paragraph 69 of the decision.

These cases illustrate there is considerable uncertainty about how the existing conditional sentence regime will be interpreted. This bill will provide the needed clarity and certainty to say which offences are not eligible for a conditional sentence. This will in turn prevent the need to wait for these issues to be finally resolved by the appellate courts, including perhaps the Supreme Court of Canada.

Another concern we have is that the definition of “serious personal injury offences” on its face does not cover most serious property crimes which could still be eligible for a conditional sentence. For instance, fraud, which is an offence punishable by a maximum sentence of 14 years, is a very serious crime that can have a devastating impact on the lives of its victims, yet, according to the definition of “serious personal injury offence”, it is still technically eligible for a conditional sentence.

● (1315)

I should note, however, that a recent amendment to the Criminal Code which is not yet in force provides for a mandatory sentence of two years when the value of the fraud exceeds \$1 million. In those cases a conditional sentence would not be available.

In addition, the current prerequisites to the availability of a conditional sentence do not exclude drug offences, such as the production, importation and trafficking of heroin, unless they are committed as part of a criminal organization and provided that they are punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years or more and prosecuted on indictment.

However, as hon. members well know, this bill also includes the amendments that were proposed in former Bill S-10, which also died on the order paper at the dissolution of the last Parliament. It is proposed to create mandatory minimum penalties for certain drug offences which would make them ineligible for a conditional sentence.

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It is my view that the current conditional sentencing regime fails to categorically make conditional sentences ineligible for many very serious crimes. Permitting the use of conditional sentences for some offences punishable by the highest maximum available in the code sends a message that certain offences punishable by a maximum of 14 years or life are less serious than others punishable by the same maximum. This is not the message this Parliament should be sending to Canadians.

Greater clarity and consistency is needed to limit the availability of conditional sentences and to protect Canadians from serious and violent offenders. In order to address these concerns, the proposed amendments contained in this bill would retain all the existing prerequisites for conditional sentences but would make it crystal clear which offences are ineligible. Specifically, the reforms would eliminate the reference to serious personal injury offences in section 742.1 and would make all offences punishable by 14 years or life ineligible for a conditional sentence.

This would, for instance, make the offences of fraud, robbery and many other crimes clearly ineligible for a conditional sentence. It would also make offences prosecuted on indictment and punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years ineligible for a conditional sentence if they: result in bodily harm; involve the import or export, trafficking and production of drugs; or involve the use of a weapon. It is the opinion of the government that where these circumstances are present, there is a need to emphasize the sentencing objectives of denunciation and deterrence and therefore eliminate the possibility of a conditional sentence.

In order to ensure that all serious crimes are caught, this bill also proposes a list of 11 specific offences prosecuted on indictment and punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years that would be ineligible for a conditional sentence. These offences are: prison breach, criminal harassment, sexual assault, kidnapping, trafficking in persons, abduction of persons under the age of 14 years, motor vehicle theft, theft over \$5,000, breaking and entering a place other than a dwelling house, being unlawfully in a dwelling house, and arson for fraudulent purposes.

Some hon. members might notice there are three differences from the list that was contained in Bill C-16.

First, the offence of luring a child was taken out of the list of offences punishable by 10 years' imprisonment on indictment because clause 22 of the bill proposes a mandatory minimum penalty of one year on indictment and 90 days on summary conviction. Therefore, this offence would be ineligible for a conditional sentence.

The second change was the addition of a new motor vehicle theft offence described at section 333.1 of the Criminal Code. This addition would ensure consistency with the restriction on the availability of conditional sentences for theft over \$5,000.

Last, former Bill C-16 eliminated the possibility of house arrest for the abduction of a person under the age of 14 by a parent, guardian or person having the lawful care or charge of that person. The intention, however, was to target the abduction of a person under the age of 14 by a stranger. This has been rectified in the bill by replacing the reference to section 283 by a reference to section

281 in the list of offences punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment and prosecuted on indictment that are ineligible for a conditional sentence.

● (1320)

This government is committed to ensuring that conditional sentences are used the way they were originally intended to be used, and that is for less serious offences. I am confident the more appropriate use of conditional sentence orders will strengthen public confidence in the sanction and administration of justice.

I am the chair of the Conservative Party's law enforcement officers caucus, which is made up of 11 people from both the House of Commons and the Senate who have previous experience in police investigations, in corrections and in other law enforcement agencies. We stand together to support this bill, because we have seen first hand how detrimental these conditional sentences and many of the other aspects of the bill have been to our communities. We have seen the victims of these offences suffer terribly. We have been at the front line to say that we are sorry the system failed them.

We will not stand by and allow the system to continue to fail them. We are the police officers, the corrections officers and the law enforcement officers in this House. They do not exist in any other party. We stand together to support this bill.

I would ask, in fact on behalf of victims I would beg, members of the opposition to please support this bill to make sure that our streets and communities are safe. This is imperative to continue to live in the most incredible country in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer questions from members across the way, and I would implore them to think about the victims as they ask their questions.

● (1325)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the system failing. Ashley Smith was a young girl who entered the correctional system at 15. By October 31, 2006, Ms. Smith was transferred to Nova Institution for Women in Nova Scotia, a federal institution. Through 2007, Ms. Smith was transferred a total of 17 times between eight institutions during 11 months in federal custody. The beginning of Ms. Smith's journey in the criminal system was for throwing crabapples at a mailman.

The government talks about law and order, but how will it prevent the next Ashley Smith case within its correctional service if it does not fund programs for rehabilitation and mental health?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, the case of Ashley Smith is very tragic. As a former member of the public safety committee in the last Parliament, I was very fortunate to travel across this country and to other countries to observe the programs that are available in our corrections system for those who suffer with mental illness and to compare them to systems that exist in other countries.

Time after time we spoke with people involved in the corrections system, those who were caretakers, those who were involved in the actual delivery of the health care that was being provided, and some of the people who were incarcerated and were benefiting from the program.

I can assure the member there are programs. We invest millions of dollars in those programs because we, too, believe that we have to address some of these problems, such as the mental health situations of the incarcerated, and the addictions of the incarcerated. That is an important priority for the government. That is why we have a national anti-drug strategy that focuses not only on enforcement, but on treatment and education.

We will continue to put that money toward those efforts because we know it makes our communities safer.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as someone involved in law enforcement, the hon. member undoubtedly knows that the vast majority of conditional sentences are granted in cases that are less serious. Conditional sentences in more serious cases or for more serious offences are extremely rare.

Given the focus of the remarks on conditional sentences, if we were to tighten up on conditional sentences, we would be putting more people on the lower end of the severity scale in jail. These people would end up in provincial institutions, not in federal institutions.

In many institutions across the country the provincial incarceration facilities are absolutely stretched to the max; they are at capacity. If we take away discretion from judges, if we do not trust them to apply this law properly and we tell them they are required to put these people in jail, I would like the hon. member opposite to lay out for the House the compensation package her government has in mind to cover the costs that would be downloaded to the provinces for putting the people in jail who would otherwise be serving their sentences in the community.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, there were several questions and comments in that.

Let me first address his statement with regard to conditional sentences and there being people who would be incarcerated for lower-class sentences. I want to ask the member this. Of the list that we are trying to include as serious offences, what does he think a lower-class offence is? Was it the sexual assault that was benefiting from a conditional sentence? Was it perhaps the kidnapping that was benefiting from a conditional sentence? Was it the trafficking in persons? Was it the motor vehicle theft? Was it the prison breach?

These are offences for which I, as a police officer, spent much of my time chasing the offender while out on house arrest. These are serious offences that must be dealt with and there must be deterrence and denunciation. These must never have the ability of an offender to receive a conditional sentence.

• (1330)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her clarifications regarding criminal law. I know that she has a great deal of experience in this area.

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I would like her to provide some examples. We know that opponents of this bill, in Quebec especially, will always pit rehabilitation against deterrence, but these are not exclusive of one another—they are complementary. Once again, I would like my colleague to share some examples from her experience, regarding what she sees in this bill, and of the benefits that this will have for the public in terms of protecting Canadians and Quebecers.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for this excellent question.

As the minister indicated, I do have a great deal of experience in this area. The bill aims to protect the safety of our society and our communities through such measures as the elimination of conditional sentences, because we know that they only cause further suffering to the victims. However, this is not only about victims. When those who commit crimes are incarcerated, they have access to programs that could benefit them and help them become law-abiding citizens. It is important to remember that. Access to such programs is crucial to offenders. Our government is investing its efforts and financial resources in order to support and promote these programs and to give incarcerated offenders a chance to do their best to change their lives, to get out when their sentence ends and to become law-abiding, contributing members of society.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the parliamentary secretary on her admirable defence.

I would like to ask the same question as the person who preceded me on this side of the House, since the hon. member did not answer the question. I know this government prides itself on being a responsible government. I would like to know the additional costs associated with this bill. I also want to know what percentage of the cost of the bill will be downloaded to the provinces.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

As he can see, in the House we sometimes ask three, four or five questions at once and, unfortunately, the person speaking does not always have time to respond to all those questions.

Let us talk about costs. In my opinion, the most significant costs are the costs to victims. Generally speaking, it is the victims who pay. It is said that it is the victims, not the offenders, who pay between 83% and 86% of the costs associated with crime.

The hon. member referred to the cost to the provinces. He was not here when this bill was first introduced in the third session, but crown attorneys and attorneys general from all provinces supported the changes we are proposing. The hon. member is saying that the prisons are full, but that is not true. There is room. We will make more room because victims should not be paying the costs of crime. We will make sure that they are not.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, Bill C-10 perfectly illustrates the government's indifference: indifference to the facts, indifference to the evidence and indifference to a government's obligation to govern effectively.

Government Orders

The facts are clear. So far, a number of members have reported them and members will continue to do so throughout the debate. According to Statistics Canada and many other organizations, crime in Canada has been steadily decreasing over the past 20 years. We are not currently in the midst of a crime crisis. Yes, crimes are being committed. Yes, we must address the issue of crime. However, we do not need to use a sledgehammer to kill a fly, like Bill C-10. In light of this fact, we see that the government is basing its actions on fiction. Clearly, Statistics Canada includes only reported crimes; yet, the number of unreported crimes has allegedly skyrocketed. However, by definition, unreported crimes are not counted or countable. This is a work of pure fiction created by a government that refuses to see the facts, refuses to acknowledge them and refuses to take them into account. The government is using fiction to justify its bill.

The evidence is also clear. This is nothing but a tough on crime bill. However, minimum sentences and tougher sentences for crime are absolutely not deterrents. I challenge anyone across the way to present a credible study that shows that crime in Canada will be significantly reduced or dealt with because of deterrents. That is not the case.

I think this government is also profoundly indifferent to good governance. The previous question was addressed to the parliamentary secretary, but she did not answer it for obvious reasons: this government has no idea of the exorbitant costs ahead for the federal and provincial governments of the measures it wants to put in effect. That is quite clear. I will come back to the issue of cost because it is central to the NDP's opposition to this bill.

Something else that illustrates this government's indifference to good governance is the Canadian Bar Association's opposition to these measures. We keep hearing about the fact that law enforcement is in favour of these measures, but if we look at the administration of justice side of things, which will have to deal with the consequences of increased measures on the enforcement side, we see a rather fierce resistance.

I would like the government to take into consideration not just what the Canadian Police Association is saying, but also what the Canadian Bar Association thinks of all this. Both are important.

I will read what the Canadian Bar Association said barely two days ago:

The Canadian Bar Association (CBA) has concerns with several aspects of the government's proposed omnibus crime bill, including mandatory minimum sentences and overreliance on incarceration, constraints on judges' discretion to ensure a fair result in each case, and the bill's impact on specific, already disadvantaged groups.

The government must stop talking about law enforcement and start taking other considerations into account, including the administration of justice, which will be adversely affected if this bill is passed.

I was happy to hear the Minister of Public Safety speak this morning. He clarified something very important that we knew on this side of the House but that had always been avoided by the government. I am talking about the fact that this bill has essentially been inspired by the United States. I think that if we look at Hansard, it is clear that this bill was inspired by the United States. Not only was it inspired by the United States, but it was inspired by an

American approach that failed in the United States, because it did not provide any deterrent. The crime rate is higher in that country.

In the United States, this approach also failed to provide security and to ensure public order. Yet the government would have us believe that this bill would do just that. Earlier this morning, my colleague from Ottawa Centre made reference to the advice of Newt Gingrich, whom no one could confuse with a progressive and who had this warning for jurisdictions in Canada and Europe that wanted to follow the American example: it did not work.

• (1335)

We can also see the impact this approach had on a state like Texas, where skyrocketing costs greatly contributed to the economic and tax crisis experienced by the state government. This led to the abolition of measures such as minimum sentences, which did not work and which are extremely expensive in comparison to the impact they can have.

I am also happy that the Minister of Public Safety's comments demonstrated that he was fully under the illusion that the provinces are demanding such a bill en masse and that they are prepared to take on the soaring costs that will result. There are anecdotal examples of provinces that would like more serious legislation, but that is not the case in Quebec, for one. I will quote a motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly in 2001 that, I believe, would be adopted again today. It states:

THAT the National Assembly ask the Government of Canada to establish within the criminal justice system for young persons a special plan for Québec, namely the Young Offenders Act, to fully take into account its specific intervention model.

The young offender issue means a lot to me, because for two years in a previous life, I worked in a youth centre that deals with young offenders, a centre called Ressources Alternatives Rive-Sud. I worked there for nearly two years and had to deal with young people who had committed crimes ranging from shoplifting to assault. My responsibility was to meet with groups of these youth in order to make them aware of the consequences and the social cost of their actions.

This approach worked, and I will explain why. I gave dozens of sessions to hundreds of youth over the course of nearly two years. I saw only five cases of recidivism, cases in which the young offender came back to the centre. This clearly shows that the approach taken when dealing with young offenders in Quebec is working. This approach is not based on incarceration and cracking down on crime, but rather on rehabilitation and restorative justice for the victims.

By combining provisions for young offenders with eight other bills, this bill is like using a sledgehammer to kill a fly. This bill addresses some serious problems that we might all agree on, but they should have been dealt with individually. The government's irresponsible decision, and that is what it was, was to lump them all together, which means we cannot address the serious, real problems because the bill covers things that are not necessarily problems at all and that undermine solutions that have been successful in the past.

I mentioned the question of the cost. It has been difficult to get an answer from the government on that. According to estimates by Conservative Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu, it could cost up to \$2.7 billion over five years. That is a huge amount of money, which the government has not taken into account or confirmed. It has mentioned, however, that this \$2.7 billion is but a drop in the bucket compared to the victims' costs, which it calculated at about \$99 billion.

There is nothing at all in Bill C-10 to ensure that the cost of crime and the cost to victims will be less than \$99 billion. There is nothing in this bill to really help victims. This bill puts forward an approach with a much stronger focus on imprisonment and deterrence, but deterrence does not work.

If the cost to victims is truly \$99 billion, as stated by Senator Boisvenu, I challenge the members of the government to show us how passing this bill will decrease this amount.

Once again, I would like to focus on the issue of good governance, which the government has not adequately addressed.

● (1340)

As members will recall, when Bill C-25 was introduced, we repeatedly asked the Minister of Public Safety about the economic impact of this bill, which dealt, among other things, with the two-year credit for each year of pre-sentencing custody.

After being asked the question repeatedly, the minister finally said that the bill would cost approximately \$90 million. Then, after more questions were asked and more evidence was presented, he had to adjust that figure, and he said that, in the end, it would cost approximately \$2 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer disagreed with that figure as well and demonstrated that the bill would not cost the Canadian treasury \$90 million or even \$2 billion but rather \$5 billion.

This type of approach, where the government tries to shove an omnibus bill down Canadians' throats without regard for the cost, without even calculating the costs and without telling all Canadians what those costs are, is completely irresponsible.

I mentioned minimum sentences. This will be a very expensive measure. We know what happened in Texas, where they have decided to abandon this approach. More and more jurisdictions are dropping this approach because it does not have a deterrent effect. It is not an effective deterrent. At present, the Conservative government does not seem interested in controlling the cost of the prison system. Since the Conservatives came to power in 2006, the cost of the prison system has increased by 86% and, in 2013, it is expected to double compared to the first year. We are talking about \$3 billion more.

What further costs will this bill entail? We have no idea.

● (1345)

[English]

The government is trying to use rhetoric as well to bring forth its argument or to try to discredit arguments. Rhetoric is fine, but it has to be accurate at some point.

Government Orders

The government is talking about being tough on crime. It is hard to be tough on crime when it does not concern itself with the facts and evidence and replaces them with fiction. That does not demonstrate good governance. That is not being tough on crime; that is being stupid on crime.

[Translation]

I would like to remind this government that, in the May 2, 2011 election, more than 60% of Canadians rejected this approach. The Conservatives should not be talking about a strong mandate and trying to shove this down Quebecers' and Canadians' throats, because more than 60% of Canadians rejected it after the Conservatives made it central to their election platform.

The NDP will respect the message sent by Canadians and oppose this American-style bill, a bill that will not lower the crime rate, that will not reduce the number of crimes committed.

As an aside, I would like to mention the impact that such a coercive and repressive approach has had in the United States. In absolute terms, the United States now has the largest prison population. More than 2.3 million Americans, or almost 1% of the population, are currently locked away in U.S. prisons. That is more than in China, more than in Russia.

Is that really the model we want to adopt? Do we really want to build prisons, as the Americans have done, without any impact on the crime rate, since the crime rate in the United States is much higher than it is in Canada? When we are looking to take measures to deal with crime, we have to adopt measures that are smart and follow concrete examples of good management in other countries, not from countries whose approaches have been proved a failure.

Indeed, we have to fight crime. Indeed, victims need to be supported by Parliament, but offering them a bill like this is completely off target—I know: I have been a victim of crime, including burglaries.

The NDP approach has always been a balanced approach between rehabilitation, restorative justice and addressing the problems in the legal system and the parole system, which would help reinforce what deserves to be reinforced. Again, this bill is all over the map. Instead of addressing this issue more precisely and effectively, the government is taking a scattershot approach and trying to pass something, which in some ways will succeed, but in several other very significant ways will completely change Canada's philosophy of justice.

Government Orders

The government talks about law and order, but it is clear that when it comes to law enforcement, the Conservative government has already made up its mind, as it completely ignores the other side of the law, which will be accepted and administered by judges, lawyers and members of the Canadian Bar Association. I quoted the Canadian Bar Association earlier. Its voice deserves to receive more attention than it has so far.

Other people, other lawyers, others in the justice system have spoken out as well. I would like to mention what Daniel MacRury, crown attorney for Nova Scotia, had to say. Among other things, he said that sometimes judges have no alternative but to incarcerate people who are mentally ill and could be placed in the health care system instead. This is one of the major consequences that is completely ignored by the government in its bill.

Other organizations have already spoken out against this bill. The Canadian Paediatric Society represents more than 3,000 pediatricians—child specialists—throughout the country. They are very concerned about the impact that this bill will have on children. Not only is the society very concerned, but it is proposing that a national youth crime prevention strategy be adopted instead. Such a strategy does not exist at present. We do not have a strategy to prevent youth crime. The Conservatives do not want it and prefer to play hardball in order to please one particular voter base, among others, that they have attracted.

I can also say that the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates opposes this bill. We are debating a bill that is supposed to help victims and take the best interests of children and youth into account. But it obviously does not do so.

• (1350)

[English]

Even the media is starting to get on board with the opposition bill. It actually sees what the bill is about.

I will quote the *Nanaimo Daily News* today, which has some interesting comments and insights into what is going on right now. It states, "Determined to pander to his political supporters, Prime Minister Stephen Harper tabled an omnibus crime bill Tuesday that is both unnecessary—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would just like to remind the member and all other members that you cannot refer to other members in the chamber by their given name, whether you are doing it directly or indirectly in a media quote.

Mr. Guy Caron: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I was reading from the article but I understand the point. I will restart. The article states:

Determined to pander to his political supporters, [the] Prime Minister tabled an omnibus crime bill Tuesday that is both unnecessary and foolish....The bill is foolish because it comes with a huge price. Prior to the last election, the Harper government said it wanted to spend \$2 billion to expand—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I know we are just freshly back in September, but I would remind the hon. member to avoid using names.

Mr. Guy Caron: I am getting used to it, Mr. Speaker. I will continue:

The bill is foolish because it comes with a huge price. Prior to the last election, the...government said it wanted to spend \$2 billion to expand and build new federal penitentiaries...[the] crime bill seeks to crack down on young offenders, drug dealers,

sexual predators and Canadians in foreign prisons is under fire from critics, who rightly argue it's a waste of time and money since crime rates are declining in the country.

There are aspects of the proposed legislation that make sense....

However, it goes too far and fails to recognize Statistics Canada data from the past few years that indicate crime is actually going down in this country. It also ignores American studies that say locking people up for longer doesn't help reform them....

The bill focuses on incarceration rather than crime prevention. What is more cost-efficient, jail time after the fact at \$50,000 a year per inmate, or crime prevention and restorative justice programs that cost peanuts in comparison?

The *Nanaimo Daily News* gets it and I would like the government to get it as well. We cannot, as the NDP, vote in favour of something that is so broad and imprecise and would actually impede the way that justice has been working in our country, rather than trying to address those specific issues that are being brought by anecdote.

I am really proud to follow what 60% of Canadians have told us they want us to do, which is to oppose the bill and this mentality.

• (1355)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's ombudsman for prisons says that there is a shortfall of mental health services for offenders. There are gaps in capacity, quality and standards. Criminalizing and warehousing the mentally ill does nothing to improve public safety and burdens the justice system.

What impact does my hon. colleague think the bill will have on the number of mentally ill entering the prison system, the prison environment, rehabilitation programs and violence and lockdowns?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very relevant question.

The Canadian Paediatric Society report, for one, is very clear on this subject. Prevention is absolutely crucial when it comes to dealing with crime and youth crime, and crime which has an impact on youth.

As it stands, this bill make absolutely no mention of prevention, rehabilitation or restorative justice for victims. It just hammers away at one particular aspect—coercion or incarceration. This bill is completely unbalanced. My hon. colleague has every reason to raise this particular point because it demonstrates one of the major weaknesses of Bill C-10, which we should be opposing.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. It is yet more proof that Quebec elected young Quebecers who will help the House of Commons during this Parliament.

I would like to ask my colleague and neighbour a question. Today, we have repeatedly questioned the government about the cost of this bill. All day, the Conservatives have skirted the issue. They have yet to answer the question. Does my colleague know why the Conservatives do not want to answer our question about the cost of this bill?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, we have an initial indication of what this could cost—there is talk of \$2.7 billion over five years. And that is likely a very conservative estimate if we look at other estimates we have been given, such as the one for another crime bill, which went from \$90 million to \$5 billion. If that trend continues, we will be looking at far more than \$2.7 billion over five years.

And yes, the government is refusing to answer this question. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that he does not have the information he requires to be able to make a useful and valid evaluation. I would like to use this question to send a message to the government and say that if it wishes to govern in a transparent way that respects the principles of good governance, they should give us these numbers and costs, not only for the federal government, but also for the provincial governments. And these amounts should also be evaluated by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for a very good, clear and articulate description of the problems that I think all members on the opposition benches have with Bill C-10.

I would have liked to have been able to pose this to a government member but I have not had an opportunity in this round. I am baffled by the fact that virtually every criminologist and expert who has looked at the issue of minimum mandatory sentences has concluded that they do not work. In fact, a recent article in the *Criminology & Public Policy* begins with this sentence:

Mandatory minimums are a classic instance of criminology and public policy marching in different directions.

Every member of this House wants to end crime and every member wants to protect victims.

I would like to ask the member if he has been able to find any expert evidence that would support the government's approach.

● (1400)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her question.

There is absolutely no proof of this, be it from criminologists, sociologists, academics or anyone else who is concerned with this topic. There is not a single study, Canadian or American, that demonstrates the validity of the approach this government is currently favouring. No studies demonstrate that tougher minimum sentences create a deterrent. It has been seen in the United States in particular, but also is true for Canada. We have no concrete idea of how much this approach will cost, but we know it will be a lot. And there will be absolutely no impact on reducing crime and the associated costs for victims. That is why this bill is unacceptable.

Government Orders

If the government had been responsible, it would have split this bill. That would have allowed the opposition to support certain positive elements in a consensus, as happened with the mega-trials bill in June. But that is impossible in this case.

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in and out of the House, so I have not heard the entire speech. However, I think what concerns many on the opposition benches is whether this would shift us closer to some of the failed experiences in the United States where we have seen republicans who have tried to take a similar approach on justice matters and where we have seen states that have really bankrupted themselves because of the costs of incarceration and the costs of dealing with justice issues such as the ones in this bill.

Does the member see this bill as a dangerous move toward that type of justice system?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I do see this as a step in that direction. I do not think we need to look any further than the statements made this morning by the Minister of Public Safety, who was making comparisons and defending some of the provisions in the bill based on what has been done in the United States. It is clear that this bill was inspired by the American approach. If we look at the facts and at what happened in the United States after several of these measures were adopted, for instance, minimum sentences, it is clear that it has been a completely unmanageable burden for several states, including Texas, which is paying the price today. Once again, it has had very little, if any, impact on crime rates.

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague included in his remarks something that is important to us as the official opposition that, in addition to opposing, we also be proposing. One of the items the member referred to in terms of proposals as an alternative to what the government has put forward is the issue of restorative justice. This is a cornerstone of an alternate direction to deal with matters such as we have before us now.

I wonder if the member would be good enough to explain to members in the House and anyone who is watching at home the important meaning of restorative justice as an alternative approach to the sledgehammer we have seen from the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member asked me this question, since this is an issue in which I was very involved during the years I spent at youth centres.

Government Orders

In order to help victims overcome the effects of a crime, it is important to show them that there is justice in their case. However, they also need to be able to confront the person who committed the crime, as the hon. member suggested. We are not necessarily talking about extremely serious crimes, but such may be the case. I have seen certain cases where people who were the victims of a break and enter or an assault were able, under supervision of course, to speak with the offender in order to understand why the offender committed the crime and to be more at peace with what happened. To see the justice system deal with the situation in this manner is much more meaningful for victims and helps them to cope better than if they were not involved in the process and the offender were punished using only coercive justice.

● (1405)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to be here today to speak in support of Bill C-10, the safe streets and communities act. Our Prime Minister, our justice minister and, indeed, our government has led on this important issue and I think we have done a great job on this.

At first the title of the legislation may appear broad, and indeed it is, but for a good reason. The measures contained within this legislation cover a range of provisions that will protect families, stand up for victims and hold offenders more accountable. The safe streets and communities act is part of the government's commitment to deliver on that mandate and meet it effectively and in the best interests of Canadian families.

I will just review some of the proposed amendments in the legislation that would make our communities safer. The first one is by extending greater protection to the most vulnerable members of society, as well as victims of terrorism.

Another one is further enhancing the ability of our justice system to hold criminals accountable for their actions. What a concept, actually holding criminals accountable for their actions.

A third item is helping to improve the safety and security of all Canadians. I am not sure why the opposition would be so opposed to something like that.

The safe streets and communities act would better protect children and youth from sexual predators, increase penalties for organized drug crime, end house arrest for serious crimes, protect the public from violent young offenders, eliminate pardons for serious crimes, enshrine in law a number of additional key factors in deciding whether an offender would be granted a transfer back to Canada, increase offender accountability and support victims of crime, support victims of terrorism, and protect vulnerable foreign nationals against abuse and exploitation. I am not sure why the opposition would actually be opposed to any of those measures as we are trying to work in the best interests of Canadian families.

As we have heard from my hon. colleagues, the provisions in the legislation are comprehensive. There are several measures that fall under Public Safety Canada. These include: giving victims of terrorism the ability to seek justice against individuals that carry out a terrorist attack; eliminating pardons for those who commit multiple serious crimes or sexual offences against children; and putting in

place a system wherein offenders have more responsibility for their own rehabilitation.

It also includes changes to the International Transfer of Offenders Act, which I will return to in just a moment.

It proposes changes to laws that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Justice, including helping to protect children from sexual predators by increasing penalties for sexual offences against children, as well as creating two new offences that take aim at conduct that could facilitate the sexual abuse of a child, such as luring. I know my hon. colleague, the member for Niagara Falls, has done a great job and has been a great champion on these things.

The bill also targets issues such as organized drug crime and, in the use of conditional sentence or house arrest for serious crimes, making amendments to ensure that violent and repeat young offenders are held accountable for their actions. It would also protect foreign workers who are vulnerable to falling into exploitation and trafficking.

These are all bills that Canadians have seen before, some going back as far as 2007.

Our government kept working in a minority government to get these bills passed and now we are taking strong, decisive action in the form of the safe streets and communities act.

I am very hopeful that we will see the support of all the hon. members in the House as we work to keep Canadian families safer.

In the recent Speech from the Throne, we pledged:

Our Government will defend the rights of law-abiding citizens, and it will promote Canadian values and interests at home and abroad.

Canadians know that our government is a government of action, and when we say that we will do something, we do it. We made a pledge that we would reintroduce a comprehensive law and order legislation within a hundred sitting days of the new Parliament and, with this bill, we are following through on that pledge.

The Speech from the Throne also stated:

The Government of Canada has no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens and defend against threats to our national security.

This statement is at the heart of our efforts to strengthen our law and our court systems. It is the spirit and intent that is woven into this important legislation that we have passed since 2006 that gives our law enforcement better tools and resources, that address violent and gun crimes, that protects our children and other vulnerable citizens and that ensures that offenders serve sentences that match the severity of the crimes being committed.

• (1410)

The statement also guides our government's decision to invest in crime prevention programs for youth in disadvantaged communities. I know that has been a concern of the opposition, and it has been mentioned that money should be spent on programs. Well, here it is. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes the investment of \$7.5 million annually to renew the youth gang prevention fund.

This statement was top of mind when we developed the comprehensive legislation before us today. While this legislation covers several provisions, I will take my time today to talk about a specific element of Bill C-10, the section that will amend the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

Before we go further, let us take a brief look at the history of this legislation.

As hon. members well know, Canada has been a party to international treaties related to transfer of offenders since 1978. By numbers, we have signed 14 bilateral treaties and 3 multilateral conventions with more than 60 countries to allow for the transfer of offenders.

There are many technical factors to take into consideration in transferring an offender. For example, the offender has to be serving a sentence for being involved in an activity that would also be punishable as a crime in Canada. As well, in most cases the offender must have at least six months remaining in his or her sentence, and there must be a consent of all three parties: Canada, the nation where the offender was sentenced, and the offender.

The initial legislation was modernized in 2004, and now, in the interest of public safety, the time has come to amend it again so that we can ensure Canadians feel secure in the decisions the government makes to bring offenders back to Canada.

I am happy to have the opportunity today to talk about what this amendment will and will not do and to set the record straight on a number of fronts. The legislation before us today proposes important amendments to the International Transfer of Offenders Act in order to help ensure that the commitment to protecting the safety and security of Canadians, which I know all of us share, is taken into account when considering the offender's request for transfer.

I would like to underline the two important components of the legislation before us and discuss them in further detail shortly.

Let me first briefly discuss what Bill C-10 will do.

Hon. members will know that under the present rules, the Minister of Public Safety is required to take several factors into account when considering an offender's request for a transfer. These factors include consideration of whether the offender's return to Canada would constitute a threat to the security of Canada; whether the offender left or remained outside Canada with the intention of abandoning Canada as a place of permanent residence; whether the foreign entity or its prison system presents a serious threat to the offender's security or human rights; and whether, in the opinion of the minister, the offender will, after the transfer, commit a terrorism offence or criminal organization offence within the meaning of section 2 of the Criminal Code.

Government Orders

The proposed Bill C-10 keeps those factors in place. The minister will still be able to consider these factors, as well as several others that are itemized in the existing act.

What Bill C-10 does do, however, is expressly stipulate that one of the key purposes of the International Transfer of Offenders Act is to protect the safety of Canadians. It means that the greater good of Canadians, and not first the good of the offender, is given its rightful place.

The bottom line is that Canadians want a justice system that works, and they also want a corrections system that effectively balances the rights of victims and law-abiding citizens. That is what the proposed amendments that our government has introduced will do.

The legislation our government has introduced recognizes that public safety should be a stated purpose in the determination of all offender transfer requests. Under the proposed amendments, the act's purpose would now read:

The purpose of this Act is to enhance public safety and to contribute to the administration of justice and the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community by enabling offenders to serve their sentences in the country of which they are citizens or nationals.

This means that public safety is placed at the forefront of the decision-making process, which is exactly where it belongs. The proposed amendments will also help to protect the safety of family members and children. It will do that by stipulating in legislation that the minister may consider whether a transfer will endanger the safety of a family member or of a child. This would apply in the case of an offender who has been convicted of an offence against a family member or who has been convicted of a sexual offence involving a child.

• (1415)

As well, Bill C-10 would include additional factors that may be considered in assessing requests for the transfer back to Canada, such as whether an offender has participated in a rehabilitation program.

There are omissions in the current legislation as it now stands. That is why Bill C-10 is an important bill. Bill C-10 would protect the safety and security of Canadians by clearly recognizing in the legislation itself that public safety considerations are at the centre of all offender transfer requests.

Under the proposed amendments, Bill C-10 would also give the Minister of Public Safety more flexibility in the decision-making process itself. I have heard reference made to the fact that Bill C-10 provides the minister with too much discretionary authority to consider any factor he or she would like. I would like to remind all hon. members, however, that while it is non-explicit in the existing act, the courts have stated that the minister may also consider and refer to factors other than those listed in the existing section 10 as long as they are linked to the purpose of the act.

Government Orders

I have also heard reference made to the fact that the minister would no longer be compelled in the legislation to consider a list of factors, but “may consider” any or all itemized factors if appropriate. Some have suggested the change from “shall consider” to “may consider” in Bill C-10 puts too much discretion at the hands of the minister. This is not the case. In fact, all decisions would still need to be reasonable and rendered in accordance with the purpose of the act.

As hon. members may well know, the courts have called for more transparency in decision-making. Bill C-10 answers this call by enabling a clear articulation of the pertinent considerations in each case. The proposed amendments clearly articulate the factors that may be taken into account when considering a request for transfer, based on the unique facts and circumstances of each case.

In addition, to ensure that public safety is a principal consideration in offender transfer requests, Bill C-10 would also provide for the consideration of other factors, many of which are in line with other reforms currently under way within the corrections system. These other factors would include whether, in the minister's opinion, the offender is likely to continue to engage in criminal activity after the transfer; the offender's health; and whether the offender had refused to participate in a rehabilitation or reintegration program.

In addition, Bill C-10 notes that the minister may consider whether the offender has accepted responsibility for the offence for which he or she has been convicted, including acknowledging any harm that has been done to victims and to the community; the manner in which the offender would be supervised after the transfer while serving the remainder of his or her sentence in Canada; and whether the offender has co-operated with, or has undertaken to co-operate with, law enforcement.

To sum up, the basic principles of the International Transfer of Offenders Act would remain intact, but the amendments we are proposing today would enhance the act by ensuring that public safety is stated in law as an integral part of the decision-making process for the transfer of offenders. It would put in writing that the minister may consider factors such as the safety of family members and our most vulnerable, our children, before granting a transfer of another offender back to Canada. It would also bring greater transparency and responsiveness to the decision-making process.

These are sensible changes. They are balanced and they are fair. Therefore, I urge all hon. members to vote in favour of the legislation before us today and to work with the government to ensure its speedy passage.

Once again, to summarize what this legislation is about, the proposed amendments are about greater protection to the most vulnerable members of our society as well as victims of terrorism.

• (1420)

It is also important that we look at holding criminals accountable for their actions and trying to improve the safety and security of all Canadians. I do not want hon. members or, quite frankly, Canadians would not support that.

The safe streets and communities act is about protecting children and youth from sexual predators, increasing penalties for organized drug crimes, ending house arrest for serious crimes, protecting the

public from violent young offenders, eliminating pardons for serious crimes, enshrining in law a number of additional key factors in deciding whether an offender would be granted a transfer back to Canada, increasing offender accountability, supporting victims of crime, supporting victims of terrorism and protecting vulnerable foreign nationals against abuse and exploitation.

I heard questions in previous rounds about minimum sentencing, why that seemed to be a problem and that experts talked about that. I do not know why we would oppose minimum sentencing, certainly as it relates to the exploitation of children. I believe minimum mandatory sentencing would be important to keep those violent criminals behind bars.

Once again, I encourage all members of the House to support Bill C-10.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it completely astounding that the Conservatives keep using the idea of the fight against terrorism to justify all of these regressive bills that they are trying to pass.

Does the member opposite not see the inconsistency in proposing to imprison more offenders only to offer them help once they are in prison? That is what this omnibus bill does. Why not make a one-time investment in prevention programs, which would give people the tools they need before they commit a crime? That would help them feel better about themselves and provide them with more appropriate and positive coping strategies to help them avoid ending up in prison.

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, this government has struck a good balance. As I have mentioned before, we have money set aside for anti-gang programming to deal with people.

One of the things we introduced in the budget previous to the last one was \$20 million for a program called pathways to education, an incredible program offered across the country. The good thing about pathways to education is that it addresses those very issues about which the member asked.

This program started in Toronto, in Regent Park, and one of the things that was realized was there were some early determinants that could be dealt with, like people who dropped out of high school and did not get an opportunity to go on to university. When our government realized the results of the pathways to education program, we committed \$20 million, and this program continues to be offered across the country.

One of the great things the program does is offer incentives for universities to offer short term incentives and mentoring. A whole bunch of factors go into helping divert kids into a great opportunity to get an education and have a great career.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize the majority of the member's speech on the bill was on the subject of international transfer. However, my question is one of a domestic nature, given that the hon. member mentioned, at least a couple of times, that this was about protecting our most vulnerable.

The hon. member would be well aware that while only 3% of the Canadian population identify themselves as aboriginal, the aboriginal population in our criminal institutions is closer to 20%.

What measures are in this bill or otherwise to deal with those vulnerable members of our society with respect to their involvement in criminal law?

• (1425)

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-10 is about justice. I certainly do not disagree with what the member raises. Some of those programs have been offered through Indian Affairs. Still more can be done and we will continue to work on these issues.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard a number of times from the opposite bench about programs that will keep people from crime.

I come from a riding, Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, as part of the greater city of Hamilton, where there has been some significant investments for a national crime prevention centre from HRSDC to keep people from committing crime and for gang prevention. These investments have been made in Hamilton Centre, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and Hamilton Mountain. In fact, all those ridings are held by opposition members. There were millions of dollars spent.

Does the member believe all we should do is just spend money on those kinds of programs, or should we make sure that we protect victims and actually incarcerate very serious criminals, and ensure they are behind bars so they are not committing crimes and victimizing more people?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, our government is trying to take a balanced approach. We certainly understand that some of these things can be dealt with through prevention. That is why we have some programs in place. The member mentions a program that covers a large number of seats held by the opposition, but surrounds both the member's and my riding. We understand that is important and that is why we believe we should do that.

Quite frankly, a number of the programs I talked about, such as pathways to education, are held in opposition ridings. We recognize these as being great programs. We are trying to establish and realize that for too long the rights of victims have taken a back seat to the rights of criminals. Right now it is a balancing act to try to rehabilitate people, but we also understand that if serious crimes are being committed, perpetrators will be responsible for their actions and they will do serious time as a result of serious crimes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says “offender”; we say

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“adolescent”. If we had imprisoned every thug in the past, our society might be without some great people today, and these people would have a criminal record.

As for the Youth Criminal Justice Act, this government has received suggestions for amendments to the act from the provinces. But it has refused to consider them. Why is the government not listening to the suggestions from prosecutors and people in the provinces?

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, when we look at protecting society from violent and repeat young offenders, we are not talking about minor offences. We are talking about appropriate sentences based on murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, very serious crimes. We recognize the fact that young people may make mistakes. We are not talking about petty theft, but about repeat, violent offenders.

Once again, we are trying to balance the issues of responsibility for the victim along with the responsibility for those who are committing the offences. That is why we have looked at only those who are violent and repeat offenders when it comes to young offenders.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member made a point that he could not imagine why people would be against mandatory minimums. I would suggest to him that a great deal of the evidence suggests that putting some people in prison for a period of time under mandatory minimums returns them to society having gone to crime school as opposed to having given them the rehabilitation they needed. I ask for his comments on that.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about mandatory minimum sentences for those involved in child exploitation as one example. It is important to know that if our children are being exploited, then these dangerous offenders should be kept off the street. They should not be caught and released. If they are going to be dealing with our most vulnerable, our children, they need to be dealt with accordingly and they should be kept off the streets.

• (1430)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would first of all like to mention that we reached the five hour point in the debate and from this point forward when the House returns to this matter, we will move on to 10 minute speeches.

It being 2:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, September 19, 2011.

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

APPENDIX

Address

of

The Right Honourable David Cameron

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

to both Houses of Parliament

in the House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa

on

Thursday, September 22, 2011

The Right Honourable David Cameron was welcomed

by the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada,

by the Honourable Noël Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate,

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Commons*

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Speaker of the House of Commons): I call upon the right hon. Prime Minister to take the podium.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Thank you, dear colleagues, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons, Senators and Members of Parliament, Chief Justice and members of the Supreme Court of Canada, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

[English]

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great privilege for all of us to welcome to our Parliament today the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Right Hon. David Cameron.

On a personal note, David, I have seen you recently and often—many times, in fact—both as Leader of the Opposition and Prime Minister in Great Britain, and around the world, but it is a special pleasure to meet you here in Canada, where you are joining a distinguished register of British prime ministers who have addressed this chamber.

[Translation]

For instance, most recently in 2001, the Right Hon. Tony Blair addressed this House.

[English]

The great Margaret Thatcher spoke in this place on two occasions. Perhaps most famously, it was right here in 1941, during some of the darkest days of the Second World War, that Sir Winston Churchill made his famous “some chicken, some neck” speech that did so much to rally spirits on both sides of the Atlantic.

Prime Minister, another of your predecessors, Sir Anthony Eden, called appearing before this House an almost daunting experience for the visitor. Let me assure you that he found, as you will, that in the tradition we inherited from your own country, the Commons treats its visitors much better than we do each other.

[Translation]

Once again, we welcome you and we look forward to hearing you speak in just a few minutes.

[English]

First I ask the indulgence of this House to refer briefly to those security matters and economic matters that have brought Prime Minister Cameron and myself together, usually with other world leaders, no less than seven times during the last 16 months. They are matters, I must say, in which Prime Minister Cameron's leadership has been decisive and matters that will continue to demand his firmness of purpose, such as in Libya.

[Translation]

In particular, I am referring to the role played by our two countries, with the assistance of Canada's other mother country, France, in the efforts we have devoted to helping the people of Libya build a better future. Those efforts were driven by certain fundamental convictions.

[English]

We believe, for instance, that “the state was made for man and not man for the state”, as the Right Hon. Harold Macmillan observed in this very chamber.

We also believe that when we help others to be free, it is our own liberty that we also secure. Those ancient rights of democracy and the rule of law that our two countries share are also the common aspirations of millions of people around the world. They are clearly the aspirations of the Libyan people themselves, and our mutual hope is that they will someday enjoy them in all their fullness.

[Translation]

Of course, we cannot forget the very serious problems that are facing the global economy and that bring us together as G20 partners.

[English]

Neither of us will be accused of exaggeration if we acknowledge that the most immediate test confronting all of us is to avoid the devastating consequences of a return to global recession, yet without key countries taking systemically appropriate and coordinated economic measures, without resistance to protectionism and acceptance of more flexible exchange rates, without fiscal consolidation and, above all else, without a will to address growing uncertainty to decisively tackle what are in some cases dangerous and unsustainable levels of national indebtedness—without actions on these matters, the world will not avoid such consequences.

[Translation]

I would therefore like to commend the leadership shown by Prime Minister Cameron on the economic issues of the day.

● (1740)

[English]

First, the strong guidance Prime Minister Cameron has offered to our G20 partners and his determined advocacy for fiscal discipline.

Second, his consequential handling of the difficult fiscal choices confronting the British economy. Truly among our G20 partners, Prime Minister Cameron has been a leader by example.

Prime Minister, here in Canada we have followed your progress carefully and I can safely say that, where it matters most, your thinking parallels that of our own government. To be precise, while deficit reduction is not an end in itself, the G20 fiscal targets agreed to in Toronto last year remain an essential element for rebuilding the economic health of industrialized nations.

[Translation]

Like you, Prime Minister, we are targeting those objectives with a clear plan to stimulate job creation and economic growth. Later this year, G20 leaders will meet in Cannes.

[English]

And, I dare say, when we get there in Cannes, we will have much to occupy us at the G20.

Hon. members, without further ado, it does give me great pleasure to introduce a man of immense resolve and principled action, a great friend of mine and a great friend of Canada, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Right Honourable David Cameron.

Right Hon. David Cameron (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Prime Minister, hon. members of the Senate and hon. members of the House of Commons, thank you for that incredibly warm welcome. As you said, Stephen, this does remind me of home. It is just a little bit bigger and a lot better behaved.

[Translation]

I thank you for the great honour you have bestowed upon me by inviting me to speak before this historic Parliament.

[English]

Perhaps I should have proceeded that with the warning Winston Churchill gave during one of his wartime broadcasts when he said:

[Translation]

“Be on your guard, because I am going to speak in French.”

[English]

Let me begin in this place by paying tribute to Jack Layton. I offer sincere condolences to Olivia and his family. His energy and his optimism were above politics, and I know he will be missed by all those who serve here.

One of the things I am finding about this job is that whichever country I visit, members of the royal family have got there first. I think the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, or Will and Kate as you call them here, have set the bar pretty high this time, but it is a symbol of the importance of the relationship between our two countries and the long-standing affection that our people show toward one another that the young royal couple chose Canada as the destination for their first ever overseas visit and that the people here gave them such a warm reception. Sadly, I will not be landing a helicopter in a lake or wearing a stetson, and I am sure Prime Minister Harper will be disappointed that he will not be able to challenge me at rodeo either.

As the author Brian Lee Crowley has set out, there is a strong argument that the 21st century could well be the Canadian century.

In the last few years, Canada has got every major decision right. Look at the facts. Not a single Canadian bank fell or faltered during the global banking crisis. Canada got to grips with its deficit and was running surpluses and paying down the debt before the recession, fixing the roof while the sun was still shining. Your economic leadership has helped the Canadian economy to weather the global storms far better than many of your international competitors.

The way in which you have integrated people from many different backgrounds into a mature democracy is, I believe, a model from which we can all learn, and Canada is now preparing for a better future. Alberta is the jurisdiction with the best educational results of any English-speaking jurisdiction in the world.

From BlackBerry to Canadarm, the robot arm used on 90 space shuttle missions, yours is a home of innovation and technology. In fact, BlackBerry presented Her Majesty the Queen with one of its smart phones when she visited last year, but, unsurprisingly, Her Majesty had one already.

Canada displays moral clarity and political leadership. Canadian servicemen and women have made extraordinary sacrifices in the defence of liberty and democracy, yet while some countries do a little and talk a lot, Canada is self-effacing and self-sacrificing in its contribution to the fight for a better world, so it is a privilege for me to come here today and to honour what you have done.

It is also a great pleasure to be standing here with my colleague and friend, Prime Minister Harper. I have seen at first hand over the last 16 months his outstanding leadership, not least at my first G8 and G20 summits in Muskoka and Toronto last year. Then, as now, the focus of much of our efforts was on the two issues that concern our people most: keeping them safe and getting them jobs.

This evening I want to focus my remarks on how we can work together to address some of the issues of the global economy, but let me first say something about security.

We have all suffered from Islamic extremism and violence. I have just come from the United Nations, where I argued that the events we have seen this year in North Africa and the Middle East offer a massive opportunity to spread peace, prosperity, democracy and, vitally, security, but only if we work together to seize the opportunity and to support the Arab people as they seek to fulfill aspirations for a job, a voice and a stake in their society.

● (1745)

Our two countries have always been prepared to bear the burden and pay the price to make our world safer and to defend our way of life.

The Peace Tower in this building commemorates the 67,000 Canadian lives lost in the First World War alone. Britain owes an incredible debt to the Canadian armed forces, and I want to pay tribute to them today.

Through two world wars, Canada was there. At Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele and Ypres, Canada was there. At the Somme, when our forces together suffered the worse losses in history, Canada was there. In fact, it was after the Somme that Lloyd George wrote:

The Canadians...played a part of such distinction that thenceforward they were marked out as storm troops....Whenever the Germans found the Canadian Corps coming into the line they prepared for the worst.

In our darkest hour in World War II, Canadian naval forces helped to keep the sea lanes open during the Battle of the Atlantic, running convoys across the Atlantic week after week, braving mines, submarines and blacked-out silent ships, all of which proved absolutely fundamental to our ability to survive as an independent country.

On Juno Beach, it was the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the Royal Canadian Navy that achieved such a remarkable triumph on the first day of those vital Normandy landings and which on D-Day got further inland than any of the five other invasion forces.

Today Canada is as vital and influential a military partner as it has ever been. As partners and founder members of NATO, our forces have been proud to serve alongside each other in international operations from Bosnia to Sierra Leone, and most recently from Afghanistan to Libya.

In Afghanistan, it is Canadian and British forces that have fought alongside each other in the south, in the very toughest part of the country, where few other nations would follow.

Today, Canadian personnel are engaged in vital work training the Afghan National Security Forces.

In Libya, it was a Canadian general, Charles Bouchard, who commanded the NATO operation, and brave Canadian pilots who played such a vital role in protecting civilians and helping the Libyan people to liberate themselves.

Amidst all this, I believe there could not be a more fitting tribute to the brilliance of Canadian forces and our pride at standing side by side with them than the recent renaming of the maritime command and air command as the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Prime Minister Harper and I will always ensure that Britain and Canada keep our defences strong, but we also understand the impact we can have to punch above our weight in the world to help achieve freedom, democracy and security. It is not just about military might alone, but about diplomacy, aid, culture, the promotion of our values. Britain is pleased to support the Muskoka initiative on maternal and child health launched under Prime Minister Harper's leadership at the G8 last year, and we are investing in programs to save the lives of 50,000 women in pregnancy and child birth and to stop a quarter of a million newborn babies dying needlessly.

Of course at a time when finances are tight, people question whether we should keep our aid commitments. I say yes. We need to be able to protect military power to protect our security and defend our values, but it is even better to mend the broken states and to act to stop problems before they come to our door, whether that is waves of illegal migration, the spread of diseases or new threats to our national security.

● (1750)

Take Afghanistan: If we had put a fraction of our current military spending on Afghanistan into helping Afghanistan develop 15 or 20 years ago, just think of what we might have been able to avoid over the last decade.

Or take Pakistan: Let another generation of Pakistani children enter life without a proper education or the prospects of a job and a head full of extremist propaganda and what are the risk in terms of mass migration, radicalization and even terrorism?

Britain and Canada have never turned away from the world, so it is right that we have met our aid commitments and I hope you will continue to join me in working with our international development partners, not just for the good of the developing world but for the safety and the security of us all.

Just as Britain and Canada have worked together for the world's security, so we must now work together on the biggest challenge this year: securing strong and sustainable growth in the global economy.

It is important that we are clear about the facts. We are not quite staring down the barrel, but the pattern is clear. The recovery out of the recession for the advanced economies will be difficult. Growth in Europe has stalled. Growth in America has stalled.

The effects of the Japanese earthquake, high oil and food prices have created a drag on growth, but fundamentally we are still suffering from the aftershocks of the world financial bust and economic collapse in 2008. That means families in Britain and Canada are facing a tough time.

I believe that Prime Minister Harper and I share the same analysis of what is wrong and what needs to be put right.

The world is recovering from a once in 70 years financial crisis and is suffering from debts not seen in decades. This is not a traditional cyclical recession, it is a debt crisis. When the fundamental problem is the level of debt and the fear of those levels, then the usual economic prescriptions cannot be applied. It is not simply a question of using conventional fiscal and monetary levers to stimulate growth until confidence and normal economic activity returns.

When households have borrowed too much, when banks are shrinking their balance sheets and rebuilding their capital and when governments are accumulating huge stocks of debt, the power of those traditional levers is limited.

The economic situation is much more dangerous and the solution for most countries cannot be simply to borrow more. Why? Because if the government does not have the room to borrow more in order to cut taxes or increase spending, people and markets start worrying about whether a government can actually pay back its debt. When this happens, confidence ebbs away and interest rates will rise, hitting people with mortgages and hitting companies that want to borrow to invest. We can see this happening right now in some European countries.

Of course there is a crucial role for monetary policy to help support economies in the short term and of course those that have room can use fiscal levers to do the same. Yes, demand matters but boosting it by undermining financial stability is self-defeating and damages the confidence on which economic growth depends.

A long-term solution must tackle the fundamental problem. We must address the problem of excessive debt. Let me say it again, it is a debt crisis.

Only when we properly recognize this can we begin to address banks which are too weak to pass on lower interest rates to businesses and households and consumers and businesses whose fear of debt mean then they do not want to borrow to spend.

Recovering from a debt crisis is both different and more difficult than recovering from a cyclical recession.

Ultimately, there are only three ways to deal with the overhang of debt: rescheduling them, writing them off or paying them back. Highly indebted households and governments cannot simply spend their way out of a debt crisis.

• (1755)

The more they spend, the more the debts will rise and the more the fundamental problem will grow. Instead, we need to confront the problems directly. I believe we need to do three things: get to grips with the debt and restore credibility and confidence; make it easier to do business and create jobs by freeing up our economies; and, in a global crisis, working together across the world coordinating our action, including boosting world trade, starting with the Doha round.

Let me briefly take each in turn.

First and foremost, we need to deal directly with our debts. In Britain, we have learned from Canada's own experience when you were able to take action to pay down debt. When our government took office in Britain in May 2010, we inherited the biggest budget deficit in our peacetime history. We faced the risk of rising interest rates, falling confidence and even questions about our credit worthiness as a country.

So we have taken some really tough decisions to rescue our public finances and we have begun to implement them. How fast we need to go will depend on circumstances. With a deficit that was forecast to be the highest in the G20 and ballooning debt, the U.K. has had to act quickly.

Britain's experience contained an invaluable lesson: it is possible to earn credibility and get ahead of the markets through decisive action. But, by its nature, a global crisis cannot be solved by countries acting alone. In a global economy, we need every country

in the world to show leadership to address its problems. With others, we continue to argue that we need to increase global demand by rebalancing where surplus countries spend more helping deficit countries to increase their exports and grow faster. Of course this is vital and it will help the deficit countries to grow and to repay debt, but more spending by surplus countries will not on its own deal with the debts.

That brings me to the eurozone. I was an advisor in the treasury at a time when our currencies were fixed through the exchange rate mechanism in Europe. It failed, and it taught me that different countries sometimes need very different economic policies. So I do not support Britain joining the euro and I never will. However, Britain has a strong interest in the success of the eurozone, as we all do, because the problems in the eurozone are now so big that they have begun to threaten the stability of the world economy. Why? It is because the euro area is one of the largest markets in world and the euro is the second largest currency. While these problems are not being solved, while they grow, businesses do not invest and confidence is sapped in the euro area itself and increasingly worldwide.

Eurozone countries must act swiftly to resolve the crisis. They must implement what they have agreed. They must demonstrate they have the political will to do what is necessary to ensure the stability of the system. One way or another, they have to find a fundamental and lasting solution to the heart of the problem: the high level of indebtedness in many euro countries. And, whatever course they take, Europe's banks need to be made strong enough so they can help support the recovery, not put it at risk.

At the same time, we cannot put off the fundamental problem of the lack of competitiveness in many euro area countries. Endlessly putting off what needs to be done does not help. In fact, it makes the problem worse and it lengthens the shudder of uncertainty that looms over the world economy.

When we cannot cut taxes or increase spending to boost demand and when interest rates are already low, what is left to government is to take those simple, straightforward steps to boost the potential for growth. And we should remember that in the long term it is not fiscal policy that makes economies grow. It is making us more productive that is essential for our future long-term prosperity. That means making it easier to set up a new company, to employ people, to invest and to grow a business. This may sound simple but that does not mean it is easy to do. You quickly find you come up against all sorts of barriers, obstacles and regulations.

●(1800)

In Britain we are determined to address this. We are creating the most competitive corporate tax regime in the G20, cutting the time it takes to set up a business and reducing tax costs and regulatory burdens for new businesses. We are putting up every regulation on the Internet so people can clearly see what they are and which ones we can get rid of. We have issued a one-in one-out rule for regulation so that any minister who wants to bring in a new regulation has to get rid of an existing one first.

We are prioritizing science and infrastructure, reforming our education system and introducing new apprenticeships to help improve the skills of our young people. I am delighted that we are following in the footsteps of Prime Minister Harper in hosting the new WorldSkills summit in London next month, which will see 1,000 young people from over 50 countries competing to be the best of the best in 46 different skills, from robotics to web design.

I have argued that we need to get to grips with the overhang of debt in our national economies, that we need to make them more competitive, and also, that a global crisis cannot be solved by countries acting alone.

There are those who argue that international action requires new global institutions. I do not agree. It is not new institutions, it is political will we need and opportunities like the G20 to develop a consensus. We can have all the meetings, subcommittees and processes in the world, but if there is no political will, we will never tackle these problems and secure the strong, sustainable, balanced growth we need. That is why the political will of leaders at the G20 summit this November is so important.

Nothing sums this up better than the failure to get a global trade deal. I believe we have to re-fight the argument for free trade all over again. For me, there is nowhere better to do it than right here in Canada, a country built on trade.

The truth is, trade is the biggest wealth creator we have ever known and it is the biggest stimulus we could give our economies right now. A completed trade round could add \$170 billion to the world economy, and yet, too many people still seem to believe that trade is a sort of zero-sum game. They talk about it quite literally as if one country's success is another country's failure. They think if our exports grow, then someone else's have to shrink; that somehow if we import low-cost goods from China, we are failing; as if all the benefits of China's exports go to China alone, when we actually benefit too, from choice, from competition, from low prices in our shops. The whole point about trade is that we are baking a bigger cake and everyone can benefit from it.

I come here to Canada to stand up for free trade, to promote more trade and more investment between our two countries, and with other countries around the world.

At the G20 in Cannes, we need to agree to a credible plan to take to the WTO ministerial in December as a basis for concluding the Doha development round. If we cannot get a deal involving everyone, then we need to look at other ways in which to drive forward with the trade liberalization that our world needs, ensuring the continued work of the WTO, preventing any collapse back into protectionism which would be disastrous, but going forward,

perhaps with a coalition of the willing, where countries like Britain and Canada who want to can forge ahead with more ambitious deals and others can join later if they choose. Let us set an example to the world by concluding early next year the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Europe and Canada which will deliver a huge boost in jobs for those on both sides.

Let me conclude by saying this. The relationship between Britain and Canada is deep and strong. At the Chateau Laurier Hotel in 1954, with the Second World War still in mind, Winston Churchill put it like this:

We have surmounted all the perils and endured all the agonies of the past. We shall provide against and thus prevail over the dangers and problems of the future, withhold no sacrifice, grudge no toil, seek no sordid gain, fear no foe.

●(1805)

Let us in this new century look to the future, secure in our joint values and seeking new opportunities. We are two nations but under one Queen and united by one set of values. So let us fear no foe as we work together for a safer and better world.

Thank you.

[Applause]

[Translation]

Hon. Noël A. Kinsella (Speaker of the Senate): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Prime Minister, honourable senators and members of the House of Commons, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of all here present today, I wish to thank you, Mr. Prime Minister for your thoughtful and generous address to this joint session of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada.

As you have said, Mr. Prime Minister, Canada and the United Kingdom share a long history of friendship and solidarity.

Mr. Prime Minister, your current visit to our Parliament reaffirms the special relation existing between our two countries.

[English]

While the Thames River locates the Parliament of Westminster, the juncture of the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers locate the Parliament of Canada. For a long time, as you have indicated, these rivers carried timber to the ships bound for Great Britain, and those earliest commercial relations that have blossomed over the century.

Today, the United Kingdom is Canada's most important trading partner in the European Union. It is also our second largest source of, and destination for, foreign direct investment in the world.

● (1810)

[Translation]

The exchange of goods across the Atlantic also extends to human capital. Every year, thousands of young Canadians travel to the United Kingdom to study at your many prestigious universities. Likewise, each year Canadian schools have the pleasure of welcoming eager young minds from the United Kingdom. As with our economic exchanges, the flow of human capital between our countries strengthens and enriches the ties between our peoples.

[English]

The common values, as you have mentioned, Mr. Prime Minister, that our countries promote are also apparent on the international stage. Working together in the Commonwealth, NATO and at the United Nations, our countries stand up for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These values have guarded our participation in the contact group on Libya, and, of course, these are the values that our countries continue to promote in Afghanistan.

Canadians have the deepest respect and admiration for the efforts and the sacrifices that the brave men and women in your armed forces have made in pursuit of these principles.

On a lighter note, Prime Minister Cameron, you and Prime Minister Harper have a unique commonality in that you each have acquired new feline assistance in your respective official residences. We understand that the furry occupant of 10 Downing Street is called Larry. For our part, Canadians recently came up with the name Stanley for the furry resident at 24 Sussex Drive. Perhaps Larry and Stanley are even related.

Prime Minister Cameron, it has been an honour to have heard your words today. So, on behalf of all those gathered here and those who have been watching at home, allow me to thank you for your presence in our Parliament and to wish you fruitful and successful discussions during your stay here in Canada.

[Applause]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Speaker of the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Cameron, Prime Minister Harper, all hon. senators and members of the House of Commons, and distinguished guests:

Your presence in this House of Commons, Prime Minister Cameron, is a historic and memorable event, just as your visit to

Canada is an occasion of great significance. On behalf of all the members of the House of Commons, and indeed on behalf of all Canadians from coast to coast whom we represent, I offer you our warmest welcome and our thanks at having made the journey to address us here today.

[Translation]

By giving a speech before our Parliament, you are joining the ranks of prominent British prime ministers who honoured Canadian parliamentarians with their wise words and their informed ideas. It is interesting to note that their visits often coincided with periods of global upheaval, such as the second world war, the cold war and the global recession.

[English]

Global developments have once again placed challenges, economic and military, before both our countries. While there may be no reprieve from the threat of uncertainty, it is heartening to know that in difficult times Canada and the United Kingdom stand together, shoulder to shoulder, as friends and allies.

What Prime Minister Thatcher said in her first address to our Parliament is as true today as it was nearly 30 years ago. She said:

[Our countries] are linked in so many important ways. We believe in the same high and honourable ideals. We stand ready to defend our free and independent way of life. We agree on the great purposes which we must pursue in the wider world.

Indeed, the common bonds that underpin the great partnership between our two countries are so numerous. Beyond ancestry and heritage, beyond trade and tourism, our two countries share a common belief in the foundational principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles have been central to our shared history and guide our common world view.

● (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Prime Minister, your presence with us here today is something that my colleagues and I will remember for a long time. I would like to thank you sincerely for visiting and invite you to come back at any time.

[English]

Thank you so much for your visit here today.

[Applause]

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[illegible]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, September 23, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



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(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 23, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[English]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-4. Many of my colleagues on both sides of the House have spoken for and against the bill with great passion over the last few days. I will now inform the House of my views on this draconian and, as some would say, backward bill.

First, the bill would give the minister the power to create a two-tiered system and designate groups that he or she feels are an irregular arrival if the minister deems that people's identity or their inadmissibility cannot be determined in a timely manner. It would give the minister a new discretionary power that he or she can exercise in the public interest to order the arrival in Canada of a group of persons to be designated as an irregular arrival.

These individuals are then subjected to mandatory arrests and detention. Those who are detained are forced to wait at least 12 months before their cases are reviewed. This goes against section 9 of the charter that calls for prompt review of detention.

Those deemed irregular arrivals, which automatically makes them designated foreign nationals, would need to wait at least five years before they could apply for permanent residence, temporary residence, a temporary resident permit or an application on humanitarian or compassionate grounds.

We cannot let the politics of fear undermine the Canadian commitment to protect the rights and freedoms of those who come to our shores fleeing persecution.

I will give an example of how the bill would hurt refugees to whom we should be giving safe haven.

In 2009, Mr. Arjan Tabaj and his wife, Anilda Tabaj, along with their daughter, Maria and their two sons, Vincenzo and Christian, were deported from Canada despite interventions personally made on the family's behalf by the former member of Parliament for Etobicoke Centre. These were made to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Tabaj is a partially paralyzed survivor of an assassination attempt during the elections in Albania. Albania continues to experience regular political assassinations and the shooters in this case are free due to alleged political connections. The Tabaj family has spent the last two years in hiding out of fear for their safety in that country. They were here in Canada before and were sent back.

Following the government's wrongful deportation, Mr. Wrzesnewskij, the former member for Etobicoke Centre, privately sponsored immigration lawyer Katherine Ramsey to challenge the decision in the Federal Court of Canada. The hon. Madam Justice Simpson's August 30, 2011 ruling compelled the Government of Canada to issue temporary resident permits and visas to facilitate the Tabaj family's immediate return to safety in Canada.

Upon learning of the court victory, the Tabaj family left their hiding spot in Albania, first travelling to Greece and then to Italy. They finally arrived yesterday at terminal 3 at Pearson International Airport at 2:45 p.m. They finally came back after being sent to Albania.

Supporters and Etobicoke community members, including Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij, were present at the airport to greet this family. What a wonderful end to a tragic story.

This is a prime example how the government is failing to deal with the smugglers but hurting legitimate refugees.

The House of Commons and, in particular, the government, should realize what damage can result when we are dealing with refugees who come to our shores.

Many of us in this House and maybe some of the listeners today may not realize the terrible mistake that Canada made in 1944 when Canada refused entry of the S.S. *St. Louis* to our ports. On board the S.S. *St. Louis* were a shipload of Jewish refugees escaping Nazi Germany trying to find a new home. They were refused in many countries and, of course, at that time the minister made a terrible decision and he refused them access to our shores. The boat went back and terrible things happened to those people. That is an example of what we did wrong.

Government Orders

As Canadians, we have done things wrong and I think we realize that and we move forward with better legislation. I just talked about the Tabaj family. The Conservatives made a mistake as that minister in 1944 made a mistake. The Conservative minister made a mistake and he should apologize to that family for what it went through.

I bring this example of the S.S. *St. Louis* because Bill C-4 is a knee-jerk reaction, if we think about how it came out this summer, to make political points. Who are the points to? These refugees are not voting. However, like the Tabaj family, those passengers on that S.S. *St. Louis* were sent back to a terrible situation. We are fortunate that the Tabaj family came back here alive.

This bill fails to achieve its stated principle of cracking down on human smugglers and instead targets legitimate refugee claimants and refugees. I believe the House should pass our amendment that states the following:

this House decline to give second reading to Bill C-4, an Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, since the bill fails to achieve its stated principle of cracking down on human smugglers and instead targets legitimate refugee claimants and refugees, and because it expands the Minister's discretion in a manner that is overly broad and not limited to the mass arrival situation that supposedly inspired the introduction of this legislation, and because it presents an imprisonment scheme that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protections against arbitrary detention and prompt review of detention, and because its provisions also violate international obligations relating to refugees and respecting the treatment of persons seeking protection.

I am a son of immigrants. They were welcomed into this country in 1952. Our family has been embraced by Canadians since that time. It is a great honour that I stand here today as a son of immigrants to represent the people of Sydney—Victoria. My father often stated that Canada was one of the best countries in the world because of its opportunities and fairness.

I believe when we draw up legislation in this House we must constantly ask ourselves two questions: Does it give opportunity to people? Is it fair? Those are two major questions that fit into all legislation. That makes our country one of the best countries in the world.

As we move forward with this legislation, we would hope that the government would see the relevance of these amendments that we are bringing forward and just stop here for one minute and see what we are doing here. I ask that it look at the amendment, take it back to committee and see what other countries are doing.

We have such a great record in this country dealing with immigrants and with refugees, which is why they come here. When we go into a business shop or go with a taxi driver, these are refugees who came here over the years and we gave them opportunities and they have given back to us.

Let us not go on the slippery slope for ideological reasons and have draconian measures that may suit some voters. Let us move forward as one of the best countries in the world, accepting people out there to come into our country. Just because they come by water, they should not be discriminated against?

• (1010)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill deprives some refugees of the right for five years to

apply for permanent residence and therefore reunification with their families. This includes children.

I would like to ask the hon. member why he thinks the government is interested in blocking family reunification.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, it baffles me because Canada used to always welcome families. When families came ashore, we did not ask if it was economical. Is it economical to bring people here to let them work? I do not know what it is. It just does not make sense.

I have an example in my riding where we have, not refugees, but doctors who have come to Cape Breton and are working in our hospitals. They sometimes have to wait two, three or four years before their families can join them. It is ludicrous.

How are we going to get the brightest and the best people or refugees to come to this country if they are going to be split up from their families? It is just not fair. It is really against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for us to have those systems in place.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, similar to the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, I also have concerns. We have a lot of legal opinion that this bill would violate the charter and be struck down by the courts.

However, we also have, pertinent to the last question, obligations under the right to family, which is enshrined under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. Even when someone has been designated, under this very difficult act, as legally entitled to remain in Canada, they must wait five years before being able to get the legal status to reunite with their family.

I wonder if the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria has any further thoughts on the way the act would actually violate our legal obligations to the right to the family.

• (1015)

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a great friend of Cape Breton and we always welcome her when she comes to visit.

Why do we need to go to the courts to settle these things? Why did the Tabaj family have to go to court? Why cannot we in the House during committee come up with very positive, very good legislation so that we do not need to go to the international courts? Why do we not, as a committee, look at what Australia and other countries are doing with refugees and immigrants to see how we can streamline this and make it more suitable to families.

We hear cases time and time again about how families are being split up. It makes them non-productive. The sooner they integrate into Canadian society as young families the better. They learn our culture and our languages. It is terrible that we are in a situation now where legislation comes from the government that is against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and needs to go to the court system. That is why we have committees here to deal with that and move things forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the issue of fairness.

Members will recall that when the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism introduced the bill, he said that the primary purpose of the bill would be to target the smuggler or the profiteer. When the member makes reference to the need to see bills that are fair, when we look at this particular bill, even though the minister talked about getting the profiteer, in reality, it would not do anything for getting the profiteer. The real victim here seems to be the refugees.

I appreciate the story the member made reference to in terms of the Tabaj family that came back to Canada. Here we have refugees who are victims in a country where they come in hopes of getting asylum, and now we have a government, through this legislation, making the family a victim once again.

I wonder if the member would comment as to the fairness of that.

Hon. Mark Eying: Mr. Speaker, I have been watching the debate and we have talked about the smuggler and the profiteer. We need to get to the source. We should not wait until they come to our shores. We need to get to them in the countries where they are pulling off these stunts. We should be working with international police systems. That is where we should be going to stop these characters from doing this to these refugees.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in Bill C-4 as I have worked and do work with refugees. Every day I see the great work that is done for them through organizations such as the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association and others in northern Ontario, as well as across Canada.

I will offer some background on the bill. It is a reintroduction of Bill C-49 from the last Parliament. In part, it was drafted in reaction to the arrival of the MV *Ocean Lady* and MV *Sun Sea* to the shores of B.C. in 2009 and 2010. At that time, the government stoked fears that a significant number of the individuals aboard those vessels might be criminals or might have links to the Tamil Tigers, a listed terrorist organization. That is where Bill C-4 comes from, just so people understand.

This is my analysis of Bill C-4. It is by no means complete but all I am able to fit into nine minutes or so.

The minister can designate any group of refugees as “irregular arrivals” should he believe that examinations to establish identity and so on cannot be conducted in a timely manner. Another criteria would be if it is suspected that they have been smuggled for profit or that a criminal organization or terrorist group was involved in that smuggling.

Designated claimants are then subjected to all kinds of special rules. This is my concern. It is discriminatory. It creates two classes

of refugee claimants. It possibly violates the charter's equality rights, as well as the refugee convention which prohibits states from imposing penalties on refugees for illegal entry or presence.

It is important to remember that designated claimants, including children, will be mandatorily detained upon arrival or designation. There will be no review by the Immigration and Refugee Board of their detention for a year. Their release is only possible if they are found to be a refugee or if the refugee board orders their release. The minister may determine there are exceptional circumstances.

My concern is that this mandatory detention is a clear violation of the charter. The Supreme Court has already struck down mandatory detention without review on security certificates. It could imply indefinite detention on the basis of identity with no possibility of release until the minister decides identity has been established. Arbitrary detention is also a violation of a number of international treaties.

Mandatory conditions set out in regulations would be imposed on all designated claimants released from detention. This also causes me concern as the conditions are not specified but rather are based on unfair principles that do not take individual cases into account. It could be very burdensome as well as very expensive.

Once a designated claimant is accepted as a refugee, regulations require that he or she must then report to an immigration officer to answer questions. The decisions made regarding designated persons cannot be appealed. Not only is this discriminatory and risks violating provisions in the refugee convention, it is similar to the government's attempt in previous legislation to exclude nationals from designated countries from an appeal process.

A designated claimant cannot apply for permanent residency for five years. If the person fails to comply with the conditions or reporting requirements the five-year suspension can be extended. This rule applies to those accepted as refugees as well as to those who have been refused or have never made a claim. The worst consequence for accepted refugees is that this rule can delay reunification with their spouses and/or children for five years or more.

Designated persons can make a humanitarian and compassionate application and apply for a temporary resident permit before five years. My concern is that this would be an undue barrier for humanitarian and compassionate claims. It may also be a violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as there will be no opportunity to consider the best interests of the child.

Government Orders

● (1020)

Article 28 of the refugee convention says that states must issue travel documents. That does not apply to designated persons until they become permanent residents or are issued temporary resident permits. This means that designated refugees cannot travel outside of Canada for at least five years after they have been accepted as refugees. My concern is that this is an attempt to legislate away the rights of refugees established by international treaty.

The minister can make retroactive designations for arrivals in Canada since March 31, 2009. For example, the passengers of the *Ocean Lady* and *Sun Sea* could be designated.

What is happening is the Conservatives are playing politics with refugees, pure and simple. They are trying to frame this as a public service or public safety issue. The bill was introduced by the public safety minister, despite the fact it primarily deals with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This is an immigration and refugee issue not a public safety issue. The current law has dealt with the cases of the *Ocean Lady* and the *Sun Sea* quite adequately.

The New Democrats recognize and respect our responsibilities to refugees. The Conservatives have taken an approach that would damage our standing in the international community and violate our commitments under the convention relating to the status of refugees, the refugee convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The proposed process is unclear, arbitrary and ultimately very discriminatory. It will not curb human smuggling.

In my opinion, the Conservatives should be less focused on photo ops and more focused on enforcing the existing laws against smuggling. Rather than playing politics, they should provide the RCMP the resources they need to get the job done.

There are many organizations which do not like the bill. The Canadian Council for Refugees has called for the bill to be scrapped. Amnesty International Canada stated that this bill:

...falls far short of Canada's international human rights and refugee protection obligations and will result in serious violations of the rights of refugees and migrants.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has issued a scathing attack on the government's attitude toward refugees.

Ultimately this goes against Canadian values. We in this place and a majority of Canadians believe that as a free nation we have a responsibility to ensure that we provide a home to those refugees and migrants escaping situations that have put their lives and the lives of their families in peril.

As members can imagine, I will be voting against the bill. I welcome any questions the members may have.

● (1025)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would comment on why the New Democrats think Canada is still being chosen as a target for these ships.

The *Sun Sea* was a vessel, if we could call it that, that departed from Thailand, travelled halfway around the world and passed within miles of many other destinations that could have provided safe

shelter. Instead, it headed for Canada, not only because it was the safest destination, I would argue it was because the smugglers knew we have a very generous immigration system.

Why would the member want to see Canada exploited for that purpose?

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are approaching this issue on the basis that everyone is evil. They believe that people who arrive on our shores looking for a better life for themselves and their families do not deserve to be here and should go to some place else. The Conservatives are saying that Canadians do not want to help them.

To answer the hon. member's question, the current legislation allows for a life sentence for human smuggling. We have existing laws on the books that do that.

I reiterate that this is not a public safety issue. It should be a refugee issue.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's presentation. I heard him say that there is a possible charter violation in this legislation. He made reference to the 2007 Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Charkaoui case where the 120 day mandatory detention was struck down. The Canadian Bar Association and many legal commentators have been unequivocal in their criticism of this legislation because of charter violations.

In view of the comments made by the Supreme Court of Canada and the legal commentators on the case, is it not the case that this is more than a possible charter violation? I would suggest that it is virtually certain the bill runs afoul of the charter.

● (1030)

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of sections that Bill C-4 would violate.

Section 15 of the charter talks about equality under the law. Bill C-4 would create a new second class of refugees who are denied a temporary resident permit or a humanitarian and compassionate grounds application. For all of these reasons it would go against that section and section 9 of the charter, which deals with arbitrary detention.

We are simply not allowed to do that. This legislation calls for that and it is wrong.

I also mentioned the UN convention relating to the status of refugees. The bill is probably in violation of it.

Article 31 states:

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

The UN convention would also be broken by this legislation.

It is unfortunate that the government has a majority in this particular case. I hope the bill will go to committee and that the parts of it that are contrary to our charter of rights and the UN convention will be struck down.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-4, the so-called act to prevent human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system, and I do so with great trepidation. The bill is another misleading and ingenuous device by a government bereft of compassion and determined to exercise its majority with a punitive and heavy hand.

I would like to speak to two specific elements of Bill C-4, the first being human trafficking. The truth is that the Conservative government is playing politics at the expense of the human beings who need help and support to find a better life for themselves and for their families.

We studied the issue to trafficking human beings at great length in the status of women committee. The committee found, in its 2007 report, that the issue of human trafficking was complex and many steps needed to be taken to address this horrendous crime against vulnerable people.

The underlying cause of trafficking is poverty. Individuals are trafficked into Canada from other countries where there is no hope for a future. It often is more difficult for a woman to immigrate to Canada because there are many more barriers such as the need for money and education, which are for many women inaccessible. Immigration laws need to be changed to allow more women to immigrate on their own and not through means that leave them vulnerable to human trafficking. The temporary resident permit process needs to be reviewed and victims who have been trafficked should be sheltered for 180 days and allowed to work. The government should ensure their basic needs are met during this period.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act needs to be reviewed and amended. In particular, section 245 (f) of the regulations states in part that a "victim having been under the control or influence of traffickers...is more likely to require detention". This section needs to be eliminated. Many traffic victims are threatened with criminal or immigration exposure by their traffickers. That is preventing them from seeking help. Section 245 (f) assumes that these people are criminals and not victims. This simply reinforces the power of the traffickers. Steps need to be taken to help victims of trafficking or those in danger of trafficking instead of treating them like criminals.

The Conservatives claim that the bill cracks down on human smuggling. That is not so. As it is currently written, it concentrates too much power in the hands of the Minister of Immigration and unfairly penalizes legitimate refugees. The government should, by all means, go after the criminals, the traffickers, the smugglers, but do not pursue a course of action like that proposed in Bill C-4 that jeopardizes the innocent and the vulnerable.

The other issue I want to discuss relates to the predecessor of Bill C-4, Bill C-49, introduced in the last Parliament in reaction to the arrival of the *MV Ocean Lady* and the *MV Sun Sea* from Sri Lanka. When the *MV Sun Sea* arrived in B.C. in 2010, the government fanned the flames of fear and racism about the individuals on the boat by insisting that many of them may have had links to the Tamil Tigers. Without any investigation or efforts to determine who was on the ship or what they had endured, the government incarcerated 492 men, women and children and set in place barriers to their refugee claims.

Government Orders

What were these Sri Lankans trying to escape? Amnesty International provides some insights.

During the Sri Lankan civil war some 300,000 Tamil civilians were displaced by armed conflict and consequently detained in government camps. Those suspected of ties with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the LTTE, more than 12,000, were detained separately. Many were held incommunicado and sometimes in facilities not designed to hold prisoners, or they were detained in secret places. Innocent civilians were trapped for months prior to the conflict's end, without adequate food, shelter, sanitation and medical care, or any access to humanitarian aid. The LTTE used civilians as human shields, as well as using threats and violence to prevent them from fleeing the conflict zone. Government artillery killed and wounded those same innocent civilians, including patients in hospitals and medical workers.

• (1035)

The government of Sri Lanka failed to address the impunity enjoyed by warring factions for past humanitarian violations and continued to carry out enforced disappearances and torture. Hundreds of Tamils continued to be detained in the south for lengthy periods without charge under special security legislation. Human rights defenders and journalists were killed, assaulted, threatened and jailed. Police killings of criminal suspects intensified.

In May the Sri Lankan government declared victory over the LTTE ending more than 25 years of armed conflict. However, an end to fighting did not end the government's reliance on draconian security legislation or stem human rights violations.

Both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE violated international humanitarian law. The Sri Lankan government used heavy weaponry indiscriminately in areas densely populated by civilians. The LTTE forcibly recruited adults and children as combatants, used civilians as human shields against the approaching government forces and attacked civilians who tried to escape. Independent accounts from the conflict areas were limited as access by the media, the UN and humanitarian agencies was absolutely restricted.

According to UN estimates, thousands of civilians died in the fighting. Displaced people reported enforced disappearances of young men separated from their families by the military as civilians tried to cross into government territory. The government did not reopen the highway to the Jaffna Peninsula until July, thus severely restricting civilian access to humanitarian supplies during the first half of the year.

Government Orders

By the end of May, civilians displaced by fighting were confined to government camps in the north and east where conditions were crowded and unsanitary. The Sri Lankan government initially banned humanitarian agencies from the newly established camps, which were run by the military, and only gradually eased restrictions to allow delivery of relief material.

Humanitarian workers were not permitted to speak to displaced people. Visits by journalists were tightly controlled and no independent human rights monitoring was permitted. By year end, restrictions on freedom of movement had been relaxed, but over 100,000 people remained in the detention camps and they were dying by the thousands.

During all this time and all this misery, the Government of Canada refused to act, refused to speak out, refused to demand an end to the atrocities. Canadians of Tamil descent came by the thousands to Ottawa to beg their country, to beg their Prime Minister to do something, to say something in the desperate hope that the slaughter of their families would end. The Prime Minister did nothing. Therefore, in fact, the government helped to create the refugees it denied in 2009 and 2010.

New Democrats recognize and respect our responsibilities to refugees. By all means enforce the many laws already in place to prevent criminals from smuggling human beings or trying to gain access to our country, but do not arbitrarily abandon our human obligations to others and do not further expose our country to the criticism of other nations, which wonder aloud what happened to Canada's respect for human rights.

The bill has been soundly criticized by the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International Canada, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association and an expert panel at the Centre for Refugee Studies. They have told the government that Bill C-4 violates Canada's international human rights and refugee protection obligations. It violates charter protections against arbitrary detention and prompt review of detention.

Bill C-4 undermines Canadian values of humanity, honourable conduct and obligation to our fellow citizens both at home and around the world. They are asking how their government could justify the detention of children, defend blocking family reunification and how it could justify giving the government the power to arrest any non-citizen or permanent resident without evidence of criminality. Indeed, Canadians are asking, "How did we come to this? How do we get our Canada back, the one that we love?"

We need a resounding "no" to this legislation.

• (1040)

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is continuing the rhetoric we keep hearing from the NDP members, proving once again they are really not ready to govern this nation.

Public safety is at the heart of these measures. If Canada cannot maintain the integrity of our borders, if we cannot control who shows up, who wanders our streets or who has access to our health care and benefits, then we have a serious problem. This is why the bill is so important.

Why is the hon. member so quick to dismiss the expectations of law-abiding Canadian families that their government will stand up for them and keep our borders, streets and communities safe?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, this has nothing to do with the expectations of Canadians. Canadians expect the government to uphold our Constitution, to uphold our law and to respect the international covenants that we have signed.

In regard to this law, we have all kinds of laws and legislation to protect Canadians against smugglers. Smugglers are supposed to get life sentences if they are caught. The government harps constantly that deterrents are the solution to all. If deterrents are the solution to all, we have the deterrents now.

We do not need to jeopardize the men, women and children who are dependent on our civility and on our sense of human dignity.

In terms of ability to govern, I do not see it over there. This opposition is ready to offer the compassion, security and intelligent, practical kinds of laws Canadians want.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's passionate defence of civil liberties and the rights that we have taken on internationally to protect the rights of refugees who come to our shores.

Has she examined the claim by government members that there is some kind of queue for refugees and that these people are jumping the queue? I find that the strangest part of the propaganda for this bill, the notion that there is a queue for refugees. Clearly, in my view, there is not.

I would like to hear the comments of the member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is very insightful.

The reality is, and I encounter this from time to time when I meet with my constituents, there is this notion that there is a back door and somehow people come in through that door. The truth is there is no back door. There is no front door. We have been rejecting people. We have been sending them away for years, since the government came into power.

A case in point is this. My community has a significant number of Colombian refugees. They are fleeing a draconian government. They are fleeing death sentences. They were labour leaders and business people. In fact, a family in my community right now faces being deported. Family members were told point blank by the FARC that they would be executed, so they ran to Canada, yet they are going to be deported.

My rationalization for this rejection of virtually all Colombians is that onerous and ridiculous free trade agreement that the government signed between Canada and Colombia, an agreement that never should have been signed.

• (1045)

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is framing this bill as an attack on trafficking, smuggling and public safety.

Could the hon. member tell us who the bill really targets?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the bill is targeting the vulnerable, those who are seeking asylum, because the government somehow thinks that it is going to gain points with its base if it appears to be tough on those people who it agreed to bring in to Canada under UN agreements.

In terms of smuggling, as I said in my remarks, in 2007 the committee on the status of women did a study of human smuggling. We have found absolutely that not only were people coming into this country because they were impoverished, but they were being further taken advantage of by the lack of supports here.

There is much to do, and the government refuses to do any of it.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a personal connection to Bill C-4, since my parents are Vietnamese. I know a lot of people who are real refugees and who are commonly known as boat people. I grew up in Brossard, a wonderful, multi-ethnic city where four out of ten people are immigrants, which makes for a dynamic and very diverse multi-ethnic population.

In my riding of Brossard—La Prairie, immigration is important. Twenty-four per cent of the population has ties to immigration. I know from a personal perspective what it is like to be an immigrant, even though I was born in Canada. I know a lot of people and have friends who went through extraordinary ordeals to be able to come to Canada. There are a lot of challenges and difficulties related to that, and that does not just go for the Vietnamese community. There are the Chinese communities, the Jewish communities and the Italian communities. I know it is not easy to be an immigrant, and it is even more difficult to be a refugee.

A large number of families choose to live in Canada for its quality of life. We are an appealing host country, but people do not choose to come here just because they want live here. It is also often because they must flee their country. They do not really have the choice. They decided to leave a country where there is discrimination and where their rights are affected. International law guarantees anyone fleeing persecution the right to go to another country and seek asylum. That is why we have a refugee system. The system exists. The laws are there. It works.

A number of newcomers are fleeing their countries for political or economic reasons. Once again, the Vietnamese community is familiar with that. Starting in 1975, thousands of Vietnamese tried to leave their country by sea to come live in Canada, an open and democratic country that respects human rights.

Canada must offer protection to refugees and to people who fear persecution if they return to their country of origin. So why did the number of asylum seekers in Canada decrease drastically between 2009 and 2010? We are talking about 10,000 fewer people.

Government Orders

The repressive measures in this bill are being criticized by many civil society organizations such as the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Amnesty International is saying that Bill C-4 does not respect Canada's obligations in terms of human rights and the protection of refugees and immigrants.

This government's draconian measures are being rejected by all of the opposition parties and denounced as illegal and punitive by a number of community, religious, union and human rights groups.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the coming into force of the UN Geneva convention relating to the status of refugees. Sixty years. Bill C-4 strikes me as an odd anniversary gift from the Conservatives.

I know that many Canadians want to be tough on smugglers and illegal immigrants, but this bill punishes the refugees and not the criminals. It does not target the smugglers. It does not target the criminals. Individuals and families are the ones being targeted.

I also know that the majority of Canadians do not want to see refugees, including women and children, imprisoned for having sought asylum in Canada. Think about it: a welcoming gift of having children and parents put in prison.

The bill, as it stands, sets out detention rules and a review procedure for the detention of certain types of foreigners. This is yet another policy that divides. Can you imagine a young mother coming to Canada—a place she thinks is free, safe and known the world over to be tolerant and open—only to find herself in prison in Vancouver? Is that really how Canadians wants to welcome political refugees?

The Conservatives are saying that this bill will cut down on human trafficking. But in reality, this bill, as it stands, concentrates too much power in the hands of the Minister of Immigration and penalizes refugees.

The NDP is proposing that the criminals—the traffickers and smugglers—be punished directly.

• (1050)

As currently drafted, Bill C-4 punishes legitimate refugees and the people who try to help them. The proposed process is neither clear nor transparent and, in addition to being arbitrary, it is ultimately quite discriminatory.

Just a few months ago, Parliament passed a new law concerning refugees. What we really need now is better enforcement of that law, not new legislation. We must help equip the RCMP with the tools required to go after criminals. The Conservatives should spend less time on photo ops and more time on proper enforcement of existing legislation dealing with human trafficking. They should also provide the RCMP with the resources they need to do their work effectively, rather than playing political games.

Statements by Members

The government wants to satisfy its right wing by using the refugee issue for political purposes. The Conservatives are making this out to be a matter of public safety, but that is not the case. Even though the bill was introduced by the Minister of Public Safety, it primarily concerns the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This is about immigration and refugees. Make no mistake. It is not about public safety.

With Bill C-4, there is a total violation of refugees' rights. The Canadian Bar Association, which did not support Bill C-49, the former version of this bill, said that the bill "violates Charter protections against arbitrary detention and prompt review of detention, as well as Canada's international obligations respecting the treatment of persons seeking protection."

The NDP cannot support this bill because it could violate section 15 of the charter, which concerns equality before the law. It also creates a second class of refugees who are refused permanent residence. They are also refused a temporary resident permit, the right to apply for permanent residence on any humanitarian grounds and access to travel documents for refugees. This creates inequality before the law simply because the minister has designated these people based on the means of transportation they used to enter the country.

• (1055)

[English]

My parents are Vietnamese and I know many people who have fled Vietnam by boat. They crossed the seas and risked their lives for a better future for their children here in Canada. They are not criminals. Under this legislation they could have started their new Canadian life here in jail.

The Conservative government has a blurred understanding of human trafficking, mixing up human trafficking, human smuggling with the irregular movement of refugees. Those are very distinct notions. The government must be aware of that.

Most refugees are themselves fleeing from very difficult and oftentimes very dangerous circumstances, hoping to arrive in Canada, a more tolerant and free country, but they could end up in jail for up to a year. Imagine a mother of three children ending up in jail in Montreal because she has been deemed irregular by the government. The government is once again playing on people's fear. Is it really the way the Conservatives want to rule this country? The opposition cannot support this kind of governance.

The Conservative government is using Bill C-4 as a marketing tool, while on the other hand saying it will protect Canada from human smuggling. What the government really wants is to discourage immigration. It also wants to satisfy its base.

I strongly stand against Bill C-4.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. Certainly, I acknowledge how Canada has been enriched by the addition of so many immigrants from a wide variety of countries and, certainly, I applaud that, and I welcome him. I also welcome his presence here in the House.

However, there are a couple of things that have come out in the last two speeches that I think need to be corrected on the record. There is an implication that somehow Canada is losing its spot in the world as a compassionate country.

I need to remind all hon. members of the action of our Balanced Refugee Reform Act, which actually increased our refugee numbers by 2,500 per year. We are now well over 14,000 per year, the highest per capita in the world. Obviously, all of us would like to do more and we are, as I said, increasing by 2,500 per year.

However, we need to remind ourselves that this bill is an effort to bring balance and fairness into the system.

I would just ask my colleague, is it not fair that border officials and our security officials should have the tools to determine whether, in fact, the persons who are seeking asylum is who they say they are and whether or not they are simply facing persecution or, in some cases, possibly actually fleeing prosecution?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, let us not forget, here in Canada, when we talk about the respect for refugees and having refugees coming to Canada, Amnesty International Canada says that Bill C-4 falls far short of Canada's international human rights and refugee protection obligations, and will result in a serious violation of the rights of refugees and immigrants.

We are saying, yes, we need to have stricter application of the laws, but they already exist. We need to also support the RCMP, giving them the tools to apply the laws, but not to create a new bill that would actually affect the rights of refugees.

• (1100)

The Speaker: There will be two and a half minutes left for questions and comments after question period, but now we will move on to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WALLACEBURG

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 20, I had the honour of attending the TSN/Kraft Celebration Tour events held in Wallaceburg.

Wallaceburg garnered the highest number of online ballots in history to win the competition and claim the \$25,000 prize. Although this is a huge accomplishment, to me the bigger story was the presentation of a cheque for \$5,000 raised in one morning by the people of Wallaceburg which they donated to Trenton, their competitor.

As one of the hardest hit Canadian communities during the last decade, Wallaceburg, a town of 11,000, has lost 6,000 jobs during this time. Wallaceburg is well known for its generosity in the face of adversity. In this case it showed what it is really made of again.

Residents demonstrated one of the finest examples of community spirit I have ever seen. I applaud the people of Wallaceburg. It is indeed my privilege to be their member of Parliament.

* * *

CHILDHOOD CANCER

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 14, the waters of Niagara Falls turned gold, and on September 16, the CN Tower was bathed in golden light. These two extraordinary events were because of a courageous and remarkable young woman named Stephanie Simmons, a three time brain tumour survivor.

With the support of her incredible family, Childcan and the many organizations that help children and their families deal with cancer, Stephanie was able to organize the lighting of Niagara Falls and the CN Tower, and host a barbecue at Harbourfront. All of this was to honour the hundreds of children and families who have survived, and the bereaved families who came to Harbourfront for this first national day of awareness and action and draw attention to the reality of childhood cancer.

The House may remember Stephanie's campaign for a gold ribbon stamp and coin in honour of the victims and survivors of childhood cancer. Unfortunately, both Canada Post and the Mint have rejected Stephanie's requests, but Stephanie is persistent. Anyone who can turn Niagara and the CN Tower to gold will not be denied.

* * *

[Translation]

BREAST CANCER

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to express my support for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, a cause that is very important to me personally.

[English]

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women, and many of us have been touched by this devastating disease. Personally, my mother Lynne lost her battle with breast cancer in 1989 and this is one of the reasons I am an ardent supporter of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

I was recently joined by over 100 volunteers, including Wayne Noble, Terry Geddes and mayors Linda Collins and Ken Ferguson, at a golf tournament to support the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

I would like to take this time to thank Jen Nichol, an ardent organizer for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

[Translation]

As a doctor, I am very aware of the fantastic work being done by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

[English]

It provides support for high quality research in all areas, including education and prevention, screening, diagnosis and treatment.

Statements by Members

As October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, I am proud to stand in support of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. I ask my colleagues to participate in the Run for the Cure on October 2.

* * *

ONWARD WILLOW

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a cornerstone organization of the Guelph community celebrated its 20th anniversary, and we could not be prouder.

Since 1991, Onward Willow Better Beginnings, Better Futures has served the residents of the Willow Road area by supporting families, helping to build a stronger community and a better, more sustainable quality of life for Guelphites.

Families and especially children are the foundation of our cities, and Onward Willow has had an incredible impact on their lives. By finding and implementing new, creative and effective ways to support the healthy development of children and families, Onward Willow established itself as an essential element of the Guelph community for decades to come.

I was proud as a member of the Wellington-Guelph Housing Authority to assist Onward Willow in its infancy. I am prouder as the member of Parliament for Guelph to reflect on the amazing people who have built this organization over 20 years and to be involved heading into the next 20 years.

I congratulate and thank Onward Willow for its first-class service.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to draw attention to the International Plowing Match, which is being held this week in Chute-à-Blondeau, in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The plowing match brings together farmers from across North America and around the globe, giving them the opportunity to show off their skills and to celebrate agriculture. Over 80,000 people are expected to attend this year's celebration. I would also like to emphasize that, this week, we are celebrating the first bilingual International Plowing Match.

● (1105)

[English]

I also salute the 30 lovely Queen of the Furrow contestants from counties all across Ontario. I congratulate Courtney Connors of my own county of Prescott-Russell on having been crowned Queen of the Furrow. We are very proud of Courtney.

Statements by Members

I personally congratulate key organizers Mayor Gary Barton, Mayor Robert Kirby and Bruno Lecot, and the more than 1,000 volunteers for their generosity and hard work in making this year's International Plowing Match such a tremendous success.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I have had many opportunities to speak in this House, this is the first time I am doing so to make a personal statement.

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the voters of Laurier—Sainte-Marie for the trust they have placed in me. I will do everything I can to remain worthy of that trust. Since yesterday was the International Day of the Girl, I would also like to thank all the women who have inspired me throughout my life, particularly Jacqueline Raymond Bélanger

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all women, here and around the globe, who, through their intelligence, self-sacrifice and courage, have built countries. Our country remains a work in progress. Our country should not be built on things like the oil sands, for instance, but rather on the firm foundations of social justice and solidarity. We owe it to future generations. That is what I am committed to working on in the coming years.

* * *

[English]

ARMY CADETS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago two of Oshawa's finest cadets from the 1913 Ontario Regiment Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps, Adrian Francisco and Kyle Ryan, earned a tremendous honour by receiving their jump wings from the Canadian Forces parachutists course.

Adrian and Kyle were among the 47 cadets from across the country who were selected for the course which took place at CFB Trenton on Canada Day.

Over a five week period, Adrian and Kyle learned the basics of parachuting, and underwent several gruelling challenges, including hanging from the rafters in flight suits during flight instruction.

Kyle brought home top honours in the course and was named Canada's Most Outstanding Army Cadet and received the 2011 General Walsh Memorial Sword.

The focus, determination and discipline that Kyle and Adrian have demonstrated should serve as an inspiration to all of us. Their accomplishments are something all Canadians should admire.

I am honoured to stand before the House today and congratulate both Kyle and Adrian. They have represented the 1913 Army Cadet Corps with a tremendous amount of pride and honour.

[Translation]

PAT BURNS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and a heavy heart that Stanstead will officially open the Pat Burns Arena this weekend. We lost Pat Burns last November. Throughout his career he was one of the most popular coaches in the National Hockey League.

His fans cheered when he won the Stanley Cup and was named coach of the year. His fans were also there for him during his three bouts of cancer. Pat Burns said about the arena that the next Mario Lemieux or Sidney Crosby might come from Stanstead and play at the arena that bears his name.

I am sure that is true and that one day, he or she will win gold with Team Canada. It was a great privilege to have someone so determined and so passionate living in our community, and thanks to this arena, he will continue to have a positive influence on young people for a long time to come.

* * *

[English]

JUNCTION SHUL

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the 100th anniversary of the Junction Shul in Parkdale—High Park. It was built in 1911 to house the Congregation Knesseth Israel. It is the oldest original synagogue in Toronto still in use today.

In the early 20th century, the founding families donated funds to purchase a parcel of land on Maria Street and built the synagogue with community donations of money, labour and materials. It quickly became the heart of the Jewish community.

The descendants of these original founders continue to care for the building and congregation, and through their generous donations and hard work, the Shul has been restored to its original condition.

This past weekend, old and new members of the congregation put together a joyful street festival and welcomed in the community to celebrate this local landmark.

On this historic anniversary, we celebrate more than a historic Toronto building, we honour a community at the heart of Canada's rich and diverse history.

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● (1110)

WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a significant report released by the Convergence Consulting Group earlier this week held good news for Canadian consumers.

The report noted that more and more households are using cell phone services only. Why? Because wireless prices have come down dramatically due to greater competition, which is a direct result of the AWS spectrum auction conducted by our government in 2008.

In fact, the report indicated that new competition in the market has spurred price drops of almost 58% on voice and data plans. It has also led to a more diversified market, with new entrants forecasted to occupy 12% of the market by 2014, up from 5% today.

Decisions by our government have resulted in a wireless sector that offers more competition, greater choice and, most important of all, lower prices for consumers. These are decisions that we can be proud of.

* * *

[Translation]

CIRCUIT DES COULEURS CROSS-COUNTRY RACE

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier is a riding marked by the dynamism of its people, who are very involved in their community.

This weekend, the first edition of the Circuit des couleurs, a cross-country event organized by the Cantons-Unis de Stoneham-et-Tewkesbury, will be held.

I would like to mention the excellent work done by the Association des citoyens et citoyennes de Tewkesbury in organizing this event, which aims to highlight the cultural and natural heritage of the region.

This event will be an opportunity to meet the residents of Stoneham and Tewkesbury and also to admire the exceptional scenery in the valley of the Jacques-Cartier and the beautiful fall colours.

I invite everyone to come discover the recreational tourism services of the united townships and the studios of the region's artists who will be there. I look forward to seeing you there.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we had the privilege of welcoming British Prime Minister David Cameron to the House.

He reminded us all of the importance of Canada's economic leadership.

To quote Prime Minister Cameron:

In the last few years, Canada has got every major decision right....

Your economic leadership has helped the Canadian economy to weather the global storms far better than many of your international competitors.

But there was also an important message: the global economy is fragile and the time has come for countries to face fiscal challenges.

This is also the message that Canada, through our Minister of Finance, gave at the G20 meeting today.

Europe must take decisive action to resolve the debt problem in countries like Greece. Canada's experience and success in implementing the economic action plan serve as an important example for the entire international community.

Statements by Members

[English]

JOAN FARLEY

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Joan Farley, a remarkable woman whose vision and actions transformed Montreal's West Island community in profound and lasting ways for the benefit of thousands of children and adults with special needs and their families.

Joan was a pioneer. She sought respect and recognition for the rights of the intellectually handicapped and those experiencing mental health problems. Among the organizations Joan helped establish are the John F. Kennedy School, the Gary Taylor Centre, the West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped, Omega Community Resources, and the Lakeshore Vocational Projects Association, now known as the Centre de réadaptation de l'Ouest de Montréal.

In 1976 she founded West Island Citizen Advocacy, a group that advocates for the rights of people with special needs, creates one-on-one matches between special needs clients and volunteers, and provides supervised housing for people with mental health challenges.

In recognition of her contribution to building a better Canada, in 2004 Joan received the Order of Canada from then governor general Adrienne Clarkson.

Joan will be greatly missed, but her memory and spirit will live on and inspire future generations of community activists and volunteers.

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VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS TAX CREDIT

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government and in fact all Canadians appreciate the tremendous service provided to us all by our first responders.

This year in budget 2011 we created a new non-refundable tax credit in the amount of \$3,000 for certain volunteer firefighters, a well-deserved initiative by this Conservative government.

Fire chief Rob Simonds, the president of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, said it best when he lauded this move by the Conservative government. He said:

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) commends the federal government for reintroducing a \$3,000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters in the 2011 Federal Budget.

We would like to recognize the government for following through on its campaign commitment to pass this important initiative into law.

Our Minister of National Revenue travelled across the country all summer, promoting the awareness of many new and important tax credits which benefit all Canadians. While in Fort McMurray, I believe she said it best:

On behalf of the federal government and all Canadians, I want to thank you very much for your dedication and your selfless service. You are part of what makes Canada the best place in the world to live.

Oral Questions

● (1115)

[Translation]

THE PEOPLE OF BEAUHARNOIS—SALABERRY

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on July 18, a boat carrying a couple and their two children went down on Lake St. Francis, close to Sainte-Barbe.

Enormous waves overturned their boat. At about two o'clock in the morning, a young resident, Ève Davignon, heard yelling and alerted her father, Pierre Davignon. Pierre, with the help of a neighbour, Sébastien Frappier, managed to save the entire family from drowning.

The fire chief, Camille Pilon, and his colleagues also demonstrated courage and level-headedness. They did not hesitate to do everything necessary to help the two children, who were suffering from hypothermia.

On behalf of all the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry, I would like to commend everyone involved for their bravery. Thank you so much.

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked one year since an important vote here in the House, a vote that took place on ending the ineffective and wasteful long gun registry.

How important was it? Let us ask the member for Ajax—Pickering, the member for Yukon or the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming, because those ridings were let down a year ago, let down by members of Parliament who listened to their Ottawa bosses instead of the people who sent them here, and now they are gone. They have been replaced with great Conservative members.

Canadians have given us a strong, stable majority government to implement our strong mandate, a mandate that includes eliminating the ineffective and wasteful long gun registry. I for one look forward to that vote.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it took a visit from another Conservative for the Prime Minister to acknowledge, albeit reluctantly, the looming threat to the economy. We know that at the last minute the Prime Minister added a few lines to adjust his speech last night after David Cameron's warnings, the same warnings the NDP has been issuing for weeks now. Mouvement Desjardins has now added its own voice and its own warnings. If nothing is done, Canada will be hit by another recession, the second one under this Conservative government.

What is the Conservative government's plan for dealing with this potential crisis?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. He mentioned the Prime Minister of England. I would like to quote him.

[English]

He said, and I quote:

In the last few years Canada has got every major decision right. Look at the facts. Not a single Canadian bank fell or faltered during the global banking crisis. Canada got to grips with its deficit and was running surpluses and paying down the debt before the recession, fixing the roof while the sun was shining. Your economic leadership has helped the Canadian economy to weather the global storms far better than many of your international competitors.

I repeat, as our Minister of Finance has: we have the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, which will continue us on the path of success.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government can no longer blame the Greeks and the eurozone for the economic problems here in Canada. That argument does not hold water. It is a diversionary tactic. The Conservatives have to take responsibility for their economic failure, their inability to capitalize on Canada's advantages. We have the fiscal capacity that others do not. We can invest in infrastructure, get an excellent return on our investment, strengthen employment and the economy and give ourselves a sound competitive advantage.

No private investor would pass up such an opportunity. Why is the government passing it up once again?

[English]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the House that we do have a plan to support jobs and to create some growth here in Canada. It is a plan that, unfortunately, the NDP and the Liberals voted against.

In fact, they voted against things like flowing \$1 billion in federal funding to provinces and territories for infrastructure in 2011-12, helping manufacturers by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for two years, renewing EI pilot projects to help the unemployed, extending work-sharing agreements to help protect jobs, and creating a hiring credit for small business to help create jobs.

They need get on side with us and help—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Outremont.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the British Prime Minister called the current global economic crisis a "debt crisis". His solution is more austerity, but it is a diagnosis that simply does not apply here in Canada. Ours is a crisis of inadequate demand in the economy caused by a lack of private investment, debt-burdened households, a growing trade deficit and government cutbacks. The obvious and immediate solution is long overdue investment in infrastructure and job creation.

Will the Conservatives stop making excuses and start investing in the projects that will restore falling infrastructure while putting Canadians back to work and strengthening our economy?

• (1120)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this country cannot afford to do. Let us see the facts once and for all.

Canada has fared relatively better than most during the global recession. In fact, Canada has the best fiscal position in the G7, the lowest net debt in the G7, among the lowest of deficits in the G7 and, as we all have heard, the IMF and OECD both project that Canada's growth is going to be among the strongest in the G7 if we continue on this low-tax plan that we have put in place.

The last thing that we need is to tax our businesses \$10 billion more, which would in fact kill jobs.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last few days have underlined once again what a gamble the government is taking with the retirement security of Canadians. Its so-called pooled pension scheme throws the retirement savings of Canadians into a market roulette wheel. On the other hand, the Bay Street fund managers will have guaranteed returns.

The government's preference for padding the pockets of financial managers while ignoring the needs of Canadians for pension security is what is happening. When will the Conservatives provide guaranteed retirement security for Canadian families?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been working very hard to improve Canadians' retirement security. Let us just go over some of the things that have been done.

We cut taxes for seniors and pensioners by over \$2 billion annually. That includes pension income splitting. We reformed the framework governing federally regulated pensions to better protect pensioners. We are working with the provinces. We studied proposals and we are going to make further improvements. Now, with them, we are working on the introduction of the new pooled registered pension plan. The PRPPs will provide low-cost pension plans to millions of people who never had a pension before.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the benefits of public sector versus private sector pension plans are clear. The Canada pension plan and the Quebec equivalent are less costly to manage and they are guaranteed. The problem is that the Conservatives are not allowing citizens to use their preferred method of saving. People want to see action on this file. Canadians should be able to invest their savings in public pension plans if they so desire.

Why do the Conservatives prefer that people lose their shirts on the stock market?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard to increase retirement security for Canadians. For example, we cut taxes for seniors and pensioners by more than \$2 billion, notably by allowing pension income splitting. We have worked with the provinces to look at proposals for other improvements and, as I said earlier, we are about to implement the pooled registered pension plan. The

Oral Questions

PRPP system will provide low-cost pension plans to millions of people who do not have a pension.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the past few months have brought us the protectionist buy American legislation, an economic downturn this quarter and a rising unemployment rate. Instead of helping Canadians by creating jobs, the Conservatives are using the situation as an excuse to cut and eliminate vital programs and services. Making cuts in a time of economic downturn only exacerbates the problem.

Will the government show some flexibility and put those cuts on hold until the economy is in a better position?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government cares about what matters most: the economy and jobs. Canada's current economic growth is proof that we are on the right track for Canadian families. Both the IMF and the OECD agree that Canada will have one of the fastest growing economies in the G7. In addition, Moody's has just renewed Canada's AAA credit rating because of our economic resiliency, financial strength and low susceptibility to event risk.

* * *

• (1125)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is a tony royal gazebo, fake lakes, G20 spending or now fishing trips on search and rescue aircraft, the government's ministers think taxpayers' money is their personal reserve. No one is buying the defence minister's excuse that his lift from a fishing camp was a preplanned training demo. Training demonstrations are day-long exercises.

Could the minister confirm that his office overrode the local base, which initially denied his demand for vital rescue equipment to give him a lift to the airport?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I was on a trip to the beautiful province of Newfoundland and Labrador, a trip I paid for myself. As a result of pressing government business, I was called back from that vacation. I left the vacation early to come back to work.

Oral Questions

As the member might know, the government has reduced the use of government aircraft by over 80%. We take the use of government aircraft very seriously. It is used for government business. That is the line we will follow.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about tourism here. We are talking about accountability and responsibility on the part of ministers and the spending of taxpayers' money. This minister's story is falling apart. We know he could not have been scheduled to participate in a training mission because he knew he had to be in London, Ontario, for an announcement.

This is arrogant, high-flying abuse of life-saving equipment, plain and simple.

Can the minister table one email, one piece of paper, one piece of correspondence to back up his cockamamie story about a preplanned demonstration, or will he just fess up, apologize and—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I came back to work as a result of government business. With respect, our government has reduced the use of government aircraft by 80% in the past three years. As the hon. member knows, aircraft are used for government business.

With respect to the member himself, I am surprised that he would raise the issue of helicopters, given that his government cost taxpayers \$1 billion by cancelling the EH-101 program, when it came to the Sea King helicopter replacement.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadians learned that our military trainers in Afghanistan were involved in active combat last week when a NATO compound in Kabul came under attack.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence repeatedly told Canadians that this would be a non-combat mission. Clearly, that is not the case. This training mission is a combat mission that continues to put Canadian troops at risk.

Will the government now acknowledge that there is no non-combat military role in a war?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the combat mission in Afghanistan has now come to an end. We have transitioned to training. That training is taking place in and around Kabul. However, I do not think the member is naive enough to suggest that Canadian Forces are not going to protect themselves when in a volatile city like Kabul. They will return fire and protect themselves. That is what happened in this instance. The member and Canadians would expect no less.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is holding the government to account that says one thing and then does the other.

This incident undermines Canadians' trust in the government. We were told this would be a non-combat role. That is clearly not the case. We were told that our troops would be out of harm's way.

However, the Canadian Forces say that Kabul is an extremely violent environment.

We were even denied a chance to debate and vote on this mission in the House of Commons.

Why did the government mislead Canadians on this issue?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with some of what the hon. member is suggesting.

Yes, Kabul is a very dangerous environment. I have nothing but the greatest respect for the Canadian soldiers who are there, doing their fine work in training the Afghan national army and police.

Yes, Canadian Forces will in fact protect themselves in that environment. As I said, the hon. member would expect no less.

To suggest somehow that the Canadian government has said there will be no danger in Kabul is completely wrong and he is misleading the House.

* * *

• (1130)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence had a search and rescue helicopter pick him up while on a fishing trip. Later, he flew to London, Ontario, on a Challenger jet. And that is not all. He travelled by jet to Halifax to attend a lobster festival.

Is this the minister's way of familiarizing himself with all our different means of air and military transportation, or does he plan on becoming a pilot?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxpayers expect government officials to conduct the nation's business at a reasonable cost. It is something that our government takes very seriously.

I want to be clear. Our use of government aircraft by our ministers is always in compliance with policy. We do follow the policies. And we have reduced the use of government aircraft significantly, as we have said.

When we look at Challenger use by the Liberals who spoke earlier about this issue, we have reduced our use 80% since they abused them as personal limousines constantly. We only use them for government business.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can a lobster festival have anything to do with the army? Not so long ago, the Minister of National Defence condemned such actions. The minister's office maintains that his flight on the Cormorant had been in the works for some time. However, we learned today that the helicopter was ordered that same day.

Why was a search and rescue helicopter used for a private fishing trip?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxpayers expect government officials to be careful and prudent in their use of government aircraft. However, they also expect government officials to carry out the government's business and sometimes that necessitates the use of government aircraft. We are very careful and prudent in doing so.

We will ensure that we continue to keep the costs of such use down and respect taxpayers' dollars; something that is certainly not a priority for that party across the aisle.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister's office claimed that his flight on a search and rescue helicopter was part of a long-standing request. But now we have learned that the request to pick him up from his fishing trip was ordered at the last minute.

After logging countless hours on Canadian Forces executive jets, does the minister now feel he is completely familiar with their operations? Or does he need to jet around to a few more lobster festivals, just to make sure?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our ministers and our government officials are proud to do the government's business. We are doing the government's business for the people of Canada, and we do so in a careful and prudent fashion that respects taxpayers' dollars. We will continue to do that. We are always very careful to respect taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence is becoming as leaky as a used British submarine: leaks coming out to discredit the brass and leaks about the minister's fondness for executive travel, for fishing trips, and lobster festivals.

It seems the government is losing the confidence of the senior leadership in the Canadian Forces. Could the minister tell us who is running the show in his department?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the leadership within the Canadian Forces. Our chief of defence and down through the ranks have done an outstanding job: distinguishing themselves in international missions; responding to challenges here at home, whether it be floods or fires; and conducting themselves in concert with other government security forces during the Olympic games, during the G8 and G20.

Our Canadian Forces do a spectacular job. I could not be more proud of their leadership.

Oral Questions

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the illogical tale of the *HMCS Chicoutimi* continues after being bought second-hand from the British in 1998. After having suffered a fire in 2004, the submarine is still in dry dock today.

The government has made a claim that she will sail by 2013. Is it not true that the *HMCS Chicoutimi* is now being dismantled for parts?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker, that is not true.

In fact, what we have are four submarines that have interchangeable parts. What we are doing, of course, is trying to have those submarines available for use.

No one would deny there have been challenges with respect to these submarines that were purchased by the previous government. In fact, submarines bring an important credibility and an important capability to the Royal Canadian Navy. We are going to continue to work with our officials to see that that capability is available to Canada. That asset is something that will serve our country well in the future.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seriously, a former sailor says that there are only 80 qualified submariners in the entire Canadian Navy. Not so long ago, there were 300. Parts from *HMCS Chicoutimi* have even been installed on *HMCS Victoria*.

Will the government now admit that we will have to wait until 2016 before a single submarine is operational in the Canadian Navy?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is an important capability. The submarine program has been plagued with difficulties. These are very sophisticated vessels. One person compared their sophistication to the space shuttle in terms of the amount of equipment on board that submarine.

With respect to their availability, we have had use of those submarines at various times since taking possession of them. They are involved in an upgrade right now that will see their availability in the future, and we continue to work toward that process.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from 6,800 veterans fighting the government in the Supreme Court to get their SISIP clawback done, from widows fighting for enhanced VIP services for themselves, from atomic veterans with no compensation package, to an agent orange compensation that left out thousands of people, we now have an increasing number of homeless veterans and veterans using food banks.

Oral Questions

When the minister said yesterday in the House that we have a seamless transition to civilian life, does this mean transition to the good shepherd's society, does this mean transition to the streets, does this mean transition to food bank shelters? When will the government—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to agent orange, our government acted when the Liberals refused to act.

When it comes to homelessness, our government is taking action. In fact, in March we established the new emergency funds that allow veterans and their families to access emergency cash when there are no other funds available. We have established new initiatives in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, to help with the homeless. We have asked all of our district offices to go out and search, and assist our homeless veterans.

We take our veterans very seriously. In fact, no other government has served our veterans more honourably.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after spending two very difficult years in Albania, Arjan Tabaj and his family are finally back in Canada. The Federal Court ruled that this family had been deported without justification.

Today another family is being separated by this government. Ms. Paola Ortiz came to Canada to escape a life of physical abuse. She is married and has two children. As we speak, she is on a plane headed back to Mexico, back to the hardship and violence she was fleeing.

Why has the minister not intervened to avoid ripping this family apart?

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, part of CBSA's mandate is to investigate and remove persons who are in violation of Canada's immigration laws. Those individuals who are assessed to be in violation and do receive orders, do receive due process before the law. They are subject to various levels of appeal, including a pre-removal risk assessment.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by attacking the savings of Canadians with dual citizenship and imposing massive fines on them, the American government is threatening the financial security of hundreds of thousands of Canadians. The Conservatives responded by writing a letter.

Why is the government allowing the United States to treat law-abiding Canadians as though they were tax-evading billionaires?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. We share Canadians' concerns about this situation. We raised those concerns directly with the American government. Most Canadians who are affected by this are honest, hard-working people who obey the law. We have to do more, which is why we asked the United States government to treat these people with clemency. We also clearly explained that the Canada Revenue Agency will not collect the fines imposed by the IRS under FBAR on their behalf.

• (1140)

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are only too happy to cave in to any U.S. demand when it comes to security, but they allow the U.S. to threaten Canadian jobs with its protectionist buy American policy, and now they have failed to defend law-abiding Canadians.

Conservatives are eager to follow U.S. orders on border security, but they do nothing to protect our own citizens from the American taxman.

Why will the Prime Minister not pick up the phone, call President Obama, and stand up for Canadians' interests?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said just a moment ago in French, we have acted on this file. We have the same concerns that most Canadians have. That is why the Minister of Finance took immediate action and spoke with our American counterparts. That is why he wrote a letter indicating to Canadians that we are working on this issue.

We do not believe that it is justified that Canadians who have bank accounts here, who are honest and credible taxpaying Canadians who simply did not know that they have to file these documents, should be targeted. We are going to continue to insist that our American counterparts work on this. We are going to insist that the CRA is not going to collect these taxes on their behalf.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the best trained and most productive public services in the world. By blowing money on unnecessary high priced consultants, the Conservatives are throwing money at a problem that does not exist.

At a time when the government is preaching restraint, why is its budget for consultants totally out of control?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reckless spending and out of control debt are the key problems facing other countries today.

Private sector advice is an essential part of our plan to ensure Canada avoids the economic and financial problems that have plagued much of the rest of the world. For every dollar that is spent, we expect to receive \$200 in savings.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is wasting money by creating a shadow public service. It is an insult to our government employees, it is an insult to our taxpayers, and it is another way for the government to reward its special friends. It does not make any sense to spend money to reduce expenses.

Why is this government refusing to invest in job creation but throwing hundreds of thousands of dollars out the window on expensive consultants?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is not immune to the problems other countries are facing. Canadians gave us the strong mandate to protect and pursue Canada's economic recovery. Our government has a plan that involves keeping taxes low, creating employment for Canadians and ensuring economic growth. Irresponsible spending and uncontrollable debt are significant causes of the problems other countries are experiencing today.

* * *

[English]

PRESIDENT OF THE TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board did not invent rum bottle politics or unbridled patronage but he has certainly raised it to a high art.

We now know that the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka bought the 2008 election using the public treasury as his personal campaign war chest.

As much as we love hearing from the member for Calgary East read us prepared notes, I am not asking him. I am asking how the Prime Minister can put up with a Treasury Board President who violates his own Treasury Board guidelines to such an egregious extent.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that kind of mud-raking by the opposition was rejected in the last election.

I will be clear. The facts have not changed. This issue has been thoroughly aired. The Auditor General had all the government information.

This government is focused on what matters to Canadians, which is jobs and the economy.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, next to out and out corruption, nothing offends the sensibilities of Canadians as much as patronage pork-barrelling.

We now know that the President of the Treasury Board was setting up his buddies with lucrative and generous G8-related consulting contracts, as if, again, he had this money to dole out.

Oral Questions

It is that kind of “who you know” politics that fuels the cynicism in an already jaded electorate.

I want to ask the Conservatives what ever happened to the Public Appointments Commission that was supposed to put an end to patronage. What ever happened to the Federal Accountability Act?

• (1145)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member should see his voting record and find out how they voted against it, because he will get the answer faster.

The facts have not changed. This issue has been thoroughly aired. The Auditor General had all the government information. I will tell the member that this government is focused on jobs and working for the economy. That is what Canadians elected the government for.

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SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals were up to their old tricks by once again obstructing our measures to get tough on crime.

Our government's Safe Streets and Communities Act would increase sentences for child sex offenders, end the use of house arrest for serious and violent crimes and increase penalties for drug dealers who specifically target our children.

Victims, police and Canadians are clear. It is time we put the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals and ensure that all criminals are held accountable.

Would the Minister of Justice please tell the House why all members should support Bill C-10?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave our government a strong and clear mandate to continue making our streets and communities safer.

During the election, we committed to introducing and passing comprehensive legislation within the first 100 days of sitting in the new Parliament. We are delivering on this promise.

We talk the talk and we walk the walk. On this side of the House, the message to law-abiding Canadians is that we got their back.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's explanations to justify cuts to the budget for monitoring the ozone layer do not make sense. The minister claims that cuts are necessary to better monitor the pollution in the oil sands. The Conservatives are telling us that we have to sacrifice the ozone layer to better understand the pollution in the oil sands. The cuts will have consequences on the quality of our environment.

Why are the Conservatives not telling Canadians the truth?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say again that Environment Canada will continue to monitor the ozone. The World Ozone and Ultraviolet Data Centre will continue to deliver world-class services. Our government will continue to protect the environment in the most cost-effective way possible.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to insist that the cuts to the ozone monitoring programs are harmless, and he makes it sound so simple. He says that we have two ozone measurements and now we are just going to have one. However, he is disregarding the science because they measure different things.

Because of the minister's shortsightedness, now we will not have the data that we need to track the hole in the ozone layer. Why is the minister disregarding both science and common sense?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has misquoted me, but I will assure her that the environment remains a key priority for this government, even at times of fiscal restraint. As we are doing across all of government, we will be taking a close look at all of our spending over the next year and the results of our deficit reduction action plan will be announced in the budget next spring.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Keystone pipeline is another example of the government's failed economic and environmental policies. The pace of development in the oil sands means that the government will not even meet its own climate change targets.

Will the minister explain why the government keeps summarily promoting this pipeline instead of defending the best interests of Canadians?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Keystone XL pipeline will provide a substantial economic benefit to both Canada and the United States. We trade oil, natural gas and electricity across our borders every day.

While the opposition continues to bash Canada abroad, our government will defend the Canadian economy, will defend Canadian resources and will defend the 600,000-plus Canadian jobs that we have created since the recession started.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is talking about economic development, but we are talking

about jobs. Workers in the region are very clear: the pipeline will cause the loss of thousands of good jobs in Canada.

Why is the government prepared to sell our jobs and our environment?

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP talking about jobs and the oil sands is ridiculous. Its past environment critic has called for a moratorium on oil sands development that would kill tens of thousands of Canadian jobs. We know there are over 100,000 Canadian jobs that are tied to the oil sands. The NDP wants to stop every last one of them so it is willing to sacrifice good Canadian jobs. We are not willing to do that. We will stand up and defend Canadians.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister declared that his new government will govern for all Canadians but he will not even govern for Canadians who voted Conservative.

Peter Hoff, a wheat farmer in Alberta and a Crowfoot constituent, is one of thousands of western wheat farmers who did not vote Conservative to end the single desk Canadian Wheat Board.

Why is the government insisting that 39% of the vote is good enough to elect the Conservative government but 62% of farmers' votes are not good enough to preserve Mr. Hoff's livelihood? Why is the member for Crowfoot not standing up for his constituents?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The vast majority of western Canadian farmers understand the need and the requirements to market on their own behalf. They do that so well. Globally, they market canola, pulses and livestock domestically and around the world. We know they can do that with wheat as well. They just need a chance to do that. We will offer that. They can say no but, at the end of the day, this will happen.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about government hypocrisy.

On the one hand, approximately 40,000 Prairie grain farmers voted 62% to keep the Canadian Wheat Board. The Prime Minister declares that the vote means nothing, that it does not count. The Prime Minister, like the minister, says the Wheat Board must go.

The CWB vote had a 66% turnout and 62% said yes, and yet in British Columbia the HST vote had a 52% turnout and 55% said to get rid of the HST. There was no question on the validity of that one. My question for the government—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did an excellent job on Monday explaining to the Liberals how even they could elect more members if they use a skewed voters' list like the Wheat Board did. Of course, anybody who has to go back five years in order to prove their point is not moving forward with actual producers trying to build a future and a positive outcome to their bottom line. That is what we are acting to do. We know that value added and innovation will only follow a free market. We will deliver that free market for western Canadian farmers. The Liberals will try to keep them in shackles and chains, like they did back in 2002. We will not allow that.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives on the Standing Committee on Official Languages rejected two motions to enforce the Official Languages Act. The opposition members want all subsidiaries of Air Canada to be subject to the act, which was rejected by the Conservatives. We also asked to examine the reason why Afghan detainee documents were not in both official languages, which was also rejected.

Will the government start to work with us to enforce this legislation?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are happy to have started working together on the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Our government is determined to continue to protect and promote our country's two official languages. We allocated record funding to the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives refuse to consider opposition proposals and motions, official language minority communities are the ones that suffer. There are consequences for the members of these communities who do not receive services in the language of their choice.

Can the Prime Minister and the official languages minister ask the Conservative members sitting on the Standing Committee on Official Languages to show some good faith and to work with the opposition to serve all Canadians fairly?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that we allocated record funding to the Roadmap for

Oral Questions

Canada's Linguistic Duality. This money will strengthen the country's existing official language minority communities and will bring language and culture to new communities across Canada. I hope that we can set partisanship aside and work together on this committee.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later today, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is due to address the United Nations General Assembly and perhaps table a resolution calling for full member status of a Palestinian state that does not yet exist.

Given that the attention of the world is focused on the United Nations today, could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs remind the House of the long-standing position of the Government of Canada?

• (1155)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the long-standing position of the Government of Canada has not changed.

The only route to peace in this conflict is a peace negotiated by both parties. One of the states must be a Jewish state and recognized as such, while the Palestinian state must be a non-militarized one.

Any unilateral action is unhelpful to the situation. We urge both parties to get back to the table to undertake constructive, peaceful talks that may one day lead to an acceptable solution for both parties.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question yesterday in the House about the loss of jobs in Cape Breton.

The answer I got from the Service Canada minister was, "Tough luck, I am taking your jobs."

My question is for the Minister of ACOA. If he will not stand up to the callous actions of his colleague who is stealing away our jobs, what will he do to recovery the more than 10,000 jobs that have been lost, stolen, in the forestry, automotive, pharmaceutical and service industries? What will the Minister of ACOA do to help Cape Breton with those jobs that were lost under the government?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the hon. member knows full well that as much as he wants to use hyperbole in this place, it does not serve any purpose. The reality is that with NewPage alone—

Hon. Mark Eyking: Help us. Help us.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gerald Keddy: We are trying to help. We absolutely are.

The Minister of ACOA and the Minister of National Defence have met repeatedly on this issue. They have had long and ongoing discussions on this matter.

The closure of the mill is due to a global economic downturn. Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation has assigned a representative to a committee—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Thunder Bay are agonizing over the unexplained deaths of seven first nations students in seven years. One week ago, on Pikangikum First Nation a sixth young man this summer took his own life.

Has the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development read the Ontario chief coroner's report on the Pikangikum suicides? When will the minister act on its recommendations? What is the minister doing to make life safer and brighter for first nations youth on and off reserve?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express condolences to the community of Pikangikum for its losses. My department has been in regular contact with the community of Pikangikum and continues to work with it and other partners to ensure lasting improvements in the community.

We are working to address the nine recommendations made to our department in the Ontario coroner's report released this month and we will do everything we can to address the situation.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the finance minister is representing Canada at key meetings of the global financial leaders taking place in Washington. We all know Canada's experience and success in implementing Canada's economic action plan. Our strong fiscal fundamentals, with the lowest total government net debt to GDP ratio by far in the entire G7, and our plan to return to balanced budgets has set an example for the rest of the world.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance please outline what Canada is saying today about the current global economic challenges?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I reiterated earlier today, and as Prime Minister Cameron said yesterday, Canada is indeed an example to follow. To quote the prime minister, "[Canada's] economic leadership has helped the Canadian economy to weather the global storms far better than many of [our] international competitors".

Today, Canada will continue that economic leadership by calling on the European governments to act swiftly to fix their debt issues

and all European economies must tackle their debt overhang quickly to help secure the global economic recovery. Even more, countries with long-term debt problems must put in place and implement credible fiscal consolidation plans now.

* * *

• (1200)

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Tunisians living in Canada want to vote during the upcoming Tunisian general election. But it seems as though they will not be able to vote because the government is telling them that Canada cannot be an electoral constituency in a foreign assembly.

Does the minister know that Canada and the United States have elected officials in France's National Assembly? Does he know that the constituency being proposed by Tunisia includes Canada and the United States?

Will the minister take the necessary measures to allow Tunisians living in Canada to vote?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand full well how important it is to Canadians, especially new Canadians, to be able to exercise their democratic right to vote. However, our government is opposed to Canada being used as an electoral constituency by a foreign country.

However, we wholeheartedly support Tunisia's democratic transition, as we have from the outset.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars have been spent on personal travel by the former Governor General and the Chief of the Defence Staff for their vacations, by the defence minister for a fishing trip and by the Prime Minister for a hockey game, and now the CBC has revealed even more foolish spending on Challenger flights. Altogether, taxpayers paid \$563,000 on unjustified air travel for the month of June alone.

Given so much wasteful spending, is the Minister of Finance not embarrassed by his little lecture to Europeans yesterday about their management of public money? Is that not the pot calling the kettle black?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have been very prudent in the use of government aircraft. If we compare, for example, what happened under the Liberal Party when the typical use of a Challenger for cabinet ministers was 153 flights a year, we are looking at about 24 or 25 flights in a year, a significant reduction.

That being said, in the process of our deficit reduction action plan, we are looking at all options for savings because we want to see the taxpayer dollars treated with respect. We do not want to see waste in any aspect of government.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

LIBYA

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table and put on notice the following motion. I move:

That, in standing in solidarity with those seeking freedom in Libya, the House adopted government motions on March 21 and June 14, 2011 authorizing all necessary measures, including the use of the Canadian armed forces and military assets in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973; that given the current military situation and the success of National Transitional Council (NTC) and anti-Gaddafi forces to date, the House supports an extension of up to three months of the involvement of the Canadian armed forces operating with NATO in accordance with the legal mandate from the UNSC Resolution 1973; that the House continues to support Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law; that the House deplores the violence committed by the previous regime against the Libyan people, including the alleged use of rape as a weapon of war; that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence shall remain seized of Canada's activities under UNSC Resolution 1973 and in the rebuilding of the new Libya; and that the House continues to offer its wholehearted and unconditional support to the brave men and women of the Canadian armed forces, who stand on guard for all of us, and continue to protect Libyan civilians from the risks still posed by the Gaddafi regime.

* * *

• (1205)

EXCISE TAX ACT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (feminine hygiene products).

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill in regard to the sale of feminine hygiene products and the extension of the GST because these products are a necessity. If we look at the experience of most women in Canada, it is a 40-year experience. These products are certainly not a luxury and that their use deems an exception from the GST.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE OFFICE OF THE VETERANS' OMBUDSMAN ACT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-283, An Act to establish the office of the Veterans' Ombudsman.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill of which I am very proud. It is in regard to support for our veterans and peacekeepers.

Too many veterans are denied benefits and former peacekeepers have been abandoned. We see the evidence of this with the many homeless veterans and people who depend on food banks.

In regard to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, it is important to have qualified members on the board, people with medical credentials and also individuals who have served in the Canadian Forces because they have experience of the reality of CF personnel.

I hope the House will support this because it supports veterans.

Routine Proceedings

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA ACT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-284, An Act respecting Status of Women Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to re-establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. As we know, Canada is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and encourages the advancement and full participation of women in all spheres of life.

We know the commission was unceremoniously defunded in 1996 and its work was clearly not done. Its role was to advise the minister, promote gender equality and advance the full participation of women in our country.

With the current government, we have seen nothing but defunding of programs that would indeed advance the equality of women. It is time that we once again had an advocate who could advise the minister to ensure that women are regarded as they should be.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-285, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda).

She said: Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code to expand the definition of "identifiable group", in relation to hate propaganda, to include any section of the public distinguished by sex.

As members will know, women are not included in this. The reality is that misogyny is alive and well and women need this protection. Therefore, I am pleased to extend this bill for consideration by the House.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1210)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-286, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (compassionate care benefits for dependent children).

She said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is inspired by a number of realities, first and foremost, experiences in my riding.

Privilege

When a parent is looking after a seriously ill child, six weeks is just not adequate. It simply will not do. I suggest and ask that the support period be extended to 15 weeks. When a child is seriously ill, the entire family suffers. Parents very often have to leave their jobs and the family is in a situation where it is financially stressed. When a child is ill, a family should not ever have to endure the extra concern of a financial impediment.

I would ask that members of the House consider the reality of families that deal with children who chronically or seriously ill and consider and support my bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

SENIOR CONSUMER PRICE INDEX ACT

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-287, An Act respecting a Senior Consumer Price Index.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this bill arises out of some consultations that I have had this spring and summer with seniors and seniors' organizations. In our country the Consumer Price Index and our understanding of the poverty level that seniors are experiencing is inadequate.

My bill would amend the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security Act to provide that pensions provided under those acts are indexed in accordance with this senior consumer price index. We have a different reality today in terms of the needs of individuals and I would hope the House would support the bill and, thus, the seniors of our country.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[Translation]

LIBYA

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I would ask for unanimous consent for the following motion:

[English]

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, on Monday, September 26, 2011 the House shall consider the motion tabled earlier today by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons relating to Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of a new Libya and at 15 minutes before the expiry of time provided for government orders on that day, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROCUREMENT CONCERNING CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be here today. As I said earlier, I am rising to make an additional response on behalf of the government to the contempt allegations made by the hon. member for Malpeque on Monday, September 19, further to the initial and, I think, very adequate reply made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Ultimately the member opposite is making an attempt to block planning efforts for bringing in a bill to give western Canadian grain farmers the marketing freedom our government has committed to giving them. It should come as a surprise to no one, as the parliamentary secretary has mentioned, that this has been a staple of Conservative election platforms.

In May Canadians, including western Canadian grain farmers, gave our government a strong mandate to implement our commitments, including our pledge to give those farmers the freedom to choose how to market their grain.

The two items cited in the member's submissions both relate exclusively to the government's planning efforts in preparing to bring in a bill and to be ready for its subsequent implementation if and when it is passed by Parliament.

Before returning to the bulk of the critic's arguments, I want to briefly address his suggestion that there was a breach of section 47 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act. While I could go on at length that these allegations are false and spurious, it is well established that these questions are beyond the jurisdiction of the Chair. I would refer the House, for example, to page 261 of O'Brien and Bosc, together with the cases noted in footnote 75 there.

At the core of his submissions, the member for Malpeque claims to rely upon the October 10, 1989, decision of Mr. Speaker Fraser at pages 4457 to 4461 of *Debates*. For the benefit of the House, it may be helpful to recap very briefly what happened in that situation.

The government, having proposed a series of tax reforms but before legislation was tabled in the House, ran full-page newspaper ads about those reforms. The ads in question, which ran in August 1989, opened with the words:

On January 1, 1991, Canada's Federal Sales Tax system will change. Please save this notice. It explains the changes and the reasons for them.

In other words, it was a general broadcast to Canadians that not only presumed that Parliament would adopt these measures but that it would do so in an unamended way. That could not be further from the situation before us respecting the two items cited by the hon. member.

First is the MERX posting, which I hasten to add is a focused form of communication intended for a targeted audience of service providers and very distinct from full-page ads in newspapers of general circulation, which communicate directly with the public and provide authoritative guidance in managing their own affairs.

The document cited seeks an assessment and identification of assets and financial contracts of the Canadian Wheat Board. The purpose of the contract, as noted in the posting, is to:

provide reasonable assurance of the total financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

Later on, the notice of description reads that one of the audit's objectives is

to determine the potential financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

Let me repeat the word that I emphasized, and that is the word "potential".

The critic for the third party has also taken exception to the comment that such a repeal for the purposes of this audit engagement is "expected to be July 31, 2012". Again, I should emphasize the word "expected".

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that it does not use words that prejudice the ultimate decision of Parliament, such as the "will change" line used in the GST ads, but rather that it simply notes a date when such a transition could be "expected" for the benefit of giving certainty to the auditors' terms of reference.

To put it another way, the government is seeking additional information in the nature of quantifying the impact with respect to our very well-publicized proposal to introduce marketing freedom for western Canadian grain farmers. Moreover, if no fixed timeframe was suggested in the scope of the audit exercise, it would serve only to frustrate the original point of generating certain and reliable data in this process of quantifying the impact of the government's long-proposed plan.

I could ask why a Liberal critic is suggesting that an audit should be weakened, but I will move on.

To be clear, this request for proposals, found only on a procurement service website, is part of the government's planning efforts. To suggest that the government should be utterly incapable of consulting outside experts on proposals for significant changes in policies, let alone on a significant change like this, is folly.

Second, the hon. member for Malpeque cited an article in the July 28, 2011, edition of the *Western Producer*, which made reference to a task force constituted for the purpose of giving the government advice on "issues that are likely to arise once legislation to end the single desk is passed".

Privilege

Part of the future scenario the task force is asked to contemplate turns on when such legislation is passed, in order to give focused advice to the government on this scenario.

Again, this is entirely consistent with the planning activities of the government in preparation to implement its electoral commitments to Canadians.

• (1215)

I want to return to Mr. Speaker Fraser's 1989 ruling, in which there is one passage I wish to stress. In coming to his conclusions, Mr. Speaker Fraser said:

I can express my own opinion that the content was obviously drafted in a cavalier manner; there is an element of confidence, if not a boldness, in the use of a phrase as definitive as "save this ad!".

The hon. member for Cardigan also quoted from a May 29, 2008, ruling of Mr. Speaker Milliken, found on pages 6276 to 6278 of *Debates*. Key words from the decision quoted here on Monday were that there was no *prima facie* case of privilege in that case because there was

no misrepresentation of the proceedings of the House or of any presumption of the outcome of its deliberations.

There was, I would argue, no misrepresentation here, nor was there a presumption of what will happen here. Yes, assumptions were set for the scenarios under which planning materials were to be prepared, but these were not presuming the role and place of Parliament to pass legislation.

Next, let me turn to a second decision of Mr. Speaker Fraser on September 30, 1991, found on pages 2920 and 2921 of *Debates*, respecting government ads respecting the then government's wage offer to the public service workers. This decision allowed him to distinguish his GST rulings. With respect to the wage offer ad, he said:

...where it falls away from being exactly the same or even nearly the same as the ad on the GST is that this is not talking about in my view legislation which "has been passed or is in place". It is talking about an offer made under circumstances which I think it would be reasonable to assume the government would then have to do whatever was imperative to place that offer into effect in the event that the offer was accepted.

Mr. Speaker Milliken also had an opportunity to add to this field of precedence. In his November 25, 2002, decision on pages 1822 and 1823 of *Debates* respecting ads about the Kyoto protocol, he opined on the thrust of the original GST advertising ruling by noting:

The suggestion was that these changes were in fact already passed, and the tenor of the advertisement was extremely important in this regard and very important in regard to Mr. Speaker Fraser's ruling, as he said, first of all, that the date was fixed as to when these changes would come in when in fact the act had not been passed by Parliament, and second, that it said to save the notice because there would be no changes, that this was the way the tax would be, that "you can save this notice now knowing that this is the way it is going to be on January 1, 1991".

It was these two points that were made by Mr. Turner as objections to this particular advertising campaign and with which Mr. Speaker Fraser expressed his grave reservations at the end because of those two particular points.

Later in that ruling, Mr. Speaker Milliken added:

Generally advertising has been permitted, but what has been criticized and was criticized by Mr. Speaker Fraser, and where he had his reservations concerning the advertising campaign, was where the advertisement itself stated that there would be an implementation date and that the material in the ad was the final product. That was the objection.

Privilege

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the two decisions I have just quoted from relate to advertising, not to consultations sought for the purposes of supporting the government's planning efforts. However, they may nonetheless be of benefit to the Chair in these circumstances.

Picking up on Mr. Speaker Milliken's interpretation here respecting the tenor and the content, I want to underscore that with respect to the two documents cited, they relate to the government's planning efforts. That is their tenor, and the content relates to setting out a particular scenario for these experts to use when generating their analysis and advice.

I would argue that the government must have the ability to plan intelligently, or manage, its proposals for legislative change. What the government has done here is simply an extension of that. On the other hand, what the hon. member for Malpeque is asking for would paralyze the process, and by extension could freeze the statute books, thereby doing far more to impair Parliament than to assist it.

The government will be bringing in legislation on this issue. We have been clear on that. The House will have a chance to debate that important bill, and most certainly it will have a chance to vote on it. Nothing to the contrary has been suggested here.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you find there is no *prima facie* question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Malpeque.

• (1220)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not have much further to add, but in his initial remarks the member clearly tried to debate the issue.

This is not about debating the right of government to bring in legislation. This is about a government that is bypassing this place in the advertisement setting up their task force and basically leaving the impression with the world that it is a *fait accompli* that the Canadian Wheat Board is gone effective July 31, 2012.

It injures our international reputation in terms of the debate, among other things, but it is bypassing this place, and that is the point of my argument that I laid out the other day.

I would again refer to the task force report terms of reference, which state:

The group will take as given that

—all grains will be removed from the monopoly by August 2012.

It is very clearly saying that it is already done, even though no legislation has been introduced in this place to be debated and so on. There has been no real consultation with the Canadian Wheat Board to that effect.

No legislation has been proposed here. However, based on remarks and papers by the government, the public could assume that the Wheat Board is already gone effective July 31, and that is absolutely wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to two further points. I already tabled this, but I will just refresh your memory. As shown on page 10 of the selected decisions of Speaker Fraser, he said, when referring to the GST debate:

I expect the Department of Finance and other departments to study this ruling carefully and remind everyone within the Public Service that we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy nor a so-called administrative democracy.

I would say the government is actually operating like a dictatorship.

Second, Speaker Fraser concluded by stating:

...if ever this issue has to be debated and considered by this House again, these comments will serve to guide the House in its deliberations.

That is a very key point. I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to take the statements of Speaker Fraser very seriously. I know it is a long time ago, but he warned future governments not to do as the past government had done, and this alleged contempt by the government went much further in its documentation and in its task force. It is basically saying that the Canadian Wheat Board is all said and done without legislation having been brought forward in this place.

Western grain farmers need the opportunity to be heard before the committee. During question period today we had a member stand up and quote a Conservative who voted for that government in the election. He very clearly said he did not vote to do away with the Wheat Board, but he is now to assume the Wheat Board is gone and done, and he has no opportunity to have a say before a committee or anything in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to my original remarks and ask you to consider that presentation very seriously. I know the government is now trying to take a defensive action. We heard it from the minister today in his response. This week we heard the Prime Minister say in response to a question in the House that basically the Wheat Board is done. There has not even been legislation introduced yet. Today in response to the member for Guelph, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board basically said that the Wheat Board is done. There is no legislation to kill the Wheat Board in place yet, but the government is operating as if it has been here, debated and finished.

We can make amendments here.

To conclude, I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to take the point of privilege and contempt very seriously.

• (1225)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be very concise because I made an intervention earlier, as the member for Malpeque knows.

Just to underscore what I said in my earlier intervention and to underscore what the parliamentary secretary just referred to, there is a huge difference between expectations and statement of fact. The analogy the member for Malpeque is trying to use is that the message on the MERX website was similar to the public advertisements placed by the former Liberal government in 1989 concerning the GST. Those ads back in 1989 said that that would occur and to save the notice to ensure that people remember when the GST changes would be effected.

We are talking about expectations. Our expectation is that the Wheat Board will be fundamentally altered when we introduce legislation, when legislation is voted upon. In fact, we have talked about expectations about the Wheat Board and changes to it for several years. In the last four election campaigns we said that if elected, we would try to enact changes to the Wheat Board. Expectations have been there for several years. There is no difference now.

To suggest that we cannot talk about expectations is folly, and that is what the member for Malpeque is trying to do. He is trying to convince the Chair that by talking about expectations and the potential for change is somehow a breach of privilege and is contemptible. Nothing could be further from the truth. If members agree with the argument placed by the member for Malpeque, then no political party would be able to talk about anything during an election campaign. Parties would not be able to talk about their expectations and what they plan to do if elected because according to the member for Malpeque that is contemptible by his definition.

Clearly, there is no question of privilege here. There has been no contempt here.

Mr. Speaker, I do agree with one point raised by my colleague from Malpeque. We do urge you to give this serious consideration and get back to this House with your ruling at your first and earliest opportunity.

• (1230)

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their interventions. I assure them that I will take this matter very seriously and will come back to the House in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: When we were debating this before statements by members, the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie had two and a half minutes left for questions and comments.

I will recognize the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his election. I suspect he is going to have a long and very productive career as a member of Parliament representing his riding.

The member's parents immigrated to this country and so did I. We want to make sure that all people who seek refuge or opportunities in Canada have an equal and fair opportunity to help build the mosaic of this country that we love so much.

Government Orders

Could he please elaborate ever so slightly on some of the pitfalls of Bill C-4 and where some legitimate refugees may not ever have that opportunity to call Canada home?

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question and for his wise guidance since I came to this House.

The effect for refugees is humongous. Refugees come to Canada in order to seek a new life. They want to flee from persecution. When they come here we put them in a category where they almost have to go to jail. That is how we welcome those refugees. It is not acceptable. It goes against what Canada stands for in terms of opening the door to people who want to come here.

We have seen in the past how immigrants have helped Canada move forward. My parents came from Vietnam. I have friends and family members who have come to Canada by boat. They would be directly attacked by this bill. It really goes against what Canada stands for.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since Confederation and leading up to it, Canada has served as a land of opportunity and hope for generations of immigrants who, from every corner of the globe, seek a better life for themselves and have even greater aspirations for their children.

Together, new Canadians and long-time citizens have worked cooperatively to build communities and to build a country that is second to none, and is a model for the world. Canada's distinction, uniqueness, strength and success are drawn in part from the cultural wealth arising from the diversity of all of its citizens.

It is from that strength we have built a country that is indeed immeasurably greater than any particular region, province, culture or group within it. Just as the measure of a person is how he or she treats others around him or her, stranger or not, fundamentally the measure of a country is how it deals with those men and women who seek refuge from poverty and violence, persecution and oppression, who arrive on its shores.

As parliamentarians it falls on us to make the rules that determine how these men, women and children are received. As a parliamentarian, it does well to be reminded that there are episodes in our past where we approached those seeking refuge in a manner that was misguided and wrong.

Incidents like the *Komagata Maru* in 1914 and the SS *St. Louis* during the Second World War resulted in refugees being forced to return to an almost certain persecution, and in far too many cases, death. Generations before them, we dealt poorly with the Chinese, imposing a head tax and then an outright ban on immigration, which was only lifted in 1947.

It is incumbent upon us to not make the same mistakes that generations of lawmakers before us made. That is why the legislation before us demands serious reconsideration.

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The bill, despite its stated intention to cut down on human smugglers, fails to do so, and instead targets legitimate refugee claimants. The mechanism exists already under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to penalize an individual found to be engaged in human smuggling. As it stands, a human smuggler faces up to \$1 million in fines and a maximum of life imprisonment for smuggling more than 10 people into Canada. Yet earlier this week, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism characterized the bill as a disincentive for human smugglers. I fail to see how the bill accomplishes that goal if the prospect of life imprisonment and a \$1 million fine does not.

By granting the Minister of Public Safety the all-too-broad discretion to designate the arrival of a certain group of refugees as a "human smuggling event" or an irregular arrival subject to a mandatory one year detention, the government opens up any arrival of two refugees or more to be a potential crisis.

Once again, experts decry the move toward mandatory detention as not only ineffective, but also likely illegal. The government insists that it requires the time to determine the identity and admissibility and investigate illegal activity. However, existing statutes provide ample time for immigration officials to make these determinations.

Yet again this is an example of a government that refuses to deal with the complexities of a given situation, of a government that refuses to see an issue any other way than in black or white. Much like its misguided mandatory minimum provisions in the omnibus justice bill, it is attempting to force through the House, the solution the government has arrived at is to detain and then incarcerate that which it cannot understand.

Further to mandatory detention, the bill will restrict designated refugee claimants from making an appeal on humanitarian or compassionate grounds for five years, or from appealing to the new refugee appeal division. This legislation will surely be challenged.

The appeal process exists for a reason. Humanitarian and compassionate applications are meant to catch those cases that fall through the cracks of our legal system.

Yet if a refugee claim is found to be legitimate, the government still intends to produce more hoops to jump through, including a provision that bans a refugee from applying for permanent residency for five years after arriving.

Not only is this provision a clear violation of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as it refuses the right to assimilation and naturalization, but it is the cruel act of a government saying to someone who has already endured significant hardship, "You can stay and work to support yourself and your family and pay taxes and contribute to society, but at any moment we can decide to send you home if we feel like it. Also, by the way, you cannot leave, or you have to stay out".

That does not perpetuate loyalty; it perpetuates resentment. This is from the same government that cut \$53 million in funding to immigration settlement services across Ontario just before Christmas last year.

● (1235)

Guelph is a gateway community in Canada and 21% of its residents consider themselves immigrants.

Last week I attended the annual general meeting of the Guelph settlement services centre. This organization provides numerous programs to facilitate speedy integration of new immigrants into our community. Fifteen per cent of its budget was needlessly cut by a government that really does not understand the new face of Canada.

This year we watched as 492 Sri Lankan Tamil refugee claimants landed off our west coast. Barely a year before that, Canadians watched as a civil war tore apart that country. We watched incidents of terrorism and saw the squalor of poverty brought on by massive instability. Some 492 men, women and children packed themselves into a boat that was little more than a floating cargo hold and set out across the Pacific Ocean. There was little better about their accommodations for those months on the boat than the country they left for a better life. There was illness and death, but they came anyway.

Many of those refugees are still in detention, but there is no doubt that even the past year in prison here in Canada has been better than the wreckage of Sri Lanka. If members do not believe me, I would refer them to the comments of the Minister of Public Safety yesterday when he spoke during the debate on the justice omnibus bill. The minister said that often foreign prisoners would much prefer incarceration in Canadian jails than in their home countries, and by extension, would prefer detention in Canada to any refugee camp in the world. Really there is no disincentive in the bill for those who are seeking refuge here in Canada and even less for the real criminals in this situation, the human smugglers.

In the face of an uncertain world with increasing costs of food causing global unrest and climate change creating even larger displacements of people from African and other countries, refugee claims will only increase. Already we need measures much more creative than what is in the bill. Instead of trying to satisfy a small though vocal base by ideological legislation that looks tough but accomplishes nothing, Canada needs to begin looking to bigger and longer term solutions. We need to engage internationally in programs to deal with immigration and refugees.

Human smuggling is a scourge that will only get worse if we do not actually combat human smugglers instead of penalizing refugees. As a maritime country, we are a natural destination for boatloads of displaced immigrants. Efforts at the UN with maritime and non-maritime countries will need to be undertaken to ensure that all nations assume their responsibility to help refugee claimants.

Just as we need to be smarter on crime, we especially need to be smarter on immigration. Canada is a beacon of light for people around the world. We cannot shut our doors and turn our backs on men and women, families, seeking a better life. But we also cannot allow criminals to take advantage of the system and make money off of refugees who are only looking to escape persecution, violence and oppression.

Bill C-4 is not the right answer to what will be a defining issue for many years to come.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, looking at this bill, which attempts to legislate against smugglers and human traffickers, we see potential for some worthwhile legislation against this type of trafficking. However, this bill is far from what it claims to be. It is a direct attack against this category of refugees who arrive in Canada seeking asylum. I would like the hon. member to comment on the fact that there are no real measures in this bill that truly address human trafficking.

[English]

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. There are already penalties for human smugglers; there is a \$1 million fine and up to life imprisonment. What do the Conservatives do? They demonize and vilify people who are trying to escape circumstances which are a direct threat to their health, safety and their very lives.

As I said, those people may be willing to spend a year in detention rather than face those circumstances. In fact this legislation is not really meant to deter people from coming here. It is meant to provide cosmetic window dressing to the Conservatives' base so that Canadians and particularly the Conservatives' base think the government is doing something about this problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on a very good speech. I have a couple of questions.

First, the government brought in Bill C-11 about a year and a half ago. The features of that legislation have not yet been fully implemented. The point of that legislation was to reduce the refugee backlog. I would ask the member why he thinks the government is not waiting to see if it is successful before introducing this bill.

Second, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism said in the House that there are people overseas who believe that if they come to Canada as refugees they will get a monthly income forever. That is obviously false. It is a misconception.

In a world where no information is perfect, I would ask the member what he thinks leads the minister to believe that these people who misinterpret or get false information will actually understand the provisions of the bill. They will certainly not hear about the tough new rules from the smugglers. How will these people know about these tough new provisions?

• (1245)

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first question, the fact is the government refuses to apply the proper resources to

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deal with immigration matters and frankly to deal with refugee claims.

Up to a million people are trying to get into this country. The number was about 700,000 several years ago. The government is clearly not interested in helping immigrants get to this country.

In answer to the second question, it is like the government's crime bill. Those who are about to commit an offence do not look at the Criminal Code because they think they might have to spend some time in jail if they commit a crime. People do not think that way.

Similarly, people who are trying to escape life-threatening circumstances do not look at our immigration laws to see how they will be treated when they get here. They will escape to a country that is considered to have a welcoming and inviting reputation, one that presents them with a future for themselves and their children.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the point is the Supreme Court struck down a security certificate's detention aspect because it was unjust. Here is the government proposing another piece of legislation that does very similar things.

Does the member not believe that would be justification for striking it down?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the premise of the question. It is in violation of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is in violation of the Supreme Court decision. It is in violation of the United Nations declaration on the rights of refugees.

I have no doubt that this legislation will be successfully challenged once it is passed by the government.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-4, the Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act. Unfortunately, the title is an unworthy message for the government to convey to the rest of the world.

My riding of Parkdale—High Park is in downtown Toronto. It is a very mixed income community. For many newcomers to Canada it is a first stopping-off point. Over the years, waves of immigrants have put down roots and created institutions in our community.

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Earlier today, I spoke about the 100th anniversary of the Kneseth Israel Shul in my riding. It is the oldest original synagogue in Toronto that is still in use today. Many of the original congregants of this shul came to Canada to escape the persecution that the Jewish community was facing in Europe and other parts of the world, while others came for economic reasons. In many cases, they came with little more than the ability to work hard, their ingenuity and their creativity. Although small, this magnificent institution is so beautiful. It adds glimmer to the heart of a community that was formed 100 years ago in our neighbourhood in the Junction. That is typical of many newcomer communities in Canada.

My community is home to many who have fled Soviet bloc countries: Poles, Ukrainians, people from a variety of backgrounds. We have many Vietnamese, Tamils, Latin Americans, and most recently, Tibetans. We now have the largest Tibetan community in Canada. Also, many of the Roma from Hungary are coming to our community. A number of these community members came here as refugees because they feared for their safety and well-being in their countries of origin.

For example, the repression of Tibetans is well known. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is an honorary Canadian citizen and has come to this Parliament. We were all thrilled to meet with him. He so elegantly and generously described the struggle of Tibetans not only in modern day Tibet as it presently exists within China but also in refugee camps in India and Nepal.

Many people around the world are living with instability, war or repression. Refugees are seeking shelter from these conditions.

As part of our citizenry in the international community, Canada has signed international agreements to receive not all refugees, but our share of refugees, and to roll up our sleeves and contribute with the rest of the world to helping those in need.

In fact, I would argue that many other countries do so much more. Some of the poorest countries in the world, countries in Africa for example, have some of the largest numbers of refugees who have fled wars, famine or other kinds of hardships from nearby countries.

Canada's history is one of living up to the international treaties we have signed, as well as living up to our responsibility as a strong member of the international community.

● (1250)

My colleague from the Montreal area spoke earlier about how his family came to Canada as Vietnamese refugees.

We have a large Vietnamese community in Toronto, people who fled with not much more than what they could carry. They have made an enormous contribution to our country.

Again, I look at my own community and the institutions people have built and the tremendous creativity of people, the jobs they have created, the businesses they have opened, the art they have created, and what they offer to our country.

It is a wrong notion that somehow Canadians are paying something when refugees come here. I think we gain a tremendous amount. Canada is built on waves of immigrants, but many refugees

as well, and they have made an enormously valuable contribution to our country.

When it comes to this bill, I have to ask myself why we would want to target or demonize refugees. That is what the bill is doing. It is somehow tarnishing refugees and putting all of them under suspicion as potential smugglers and potential abusers of Canada's immigration system.

The bill claims it would crack down on human smuggling, but as the bill currently stands, it concentrates too much power in the hands of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and unfairly penalizes refugees. It sets up different tiers of status for refugees.

Our party would rather deal with criminals, the people who are abusing the system, the people who are indeed trafficking or smuggling. Yes, let us deal with them through our judicial system. However, as it stands, this bill is more likely to hurt legitimate refugees and the people who are trying to help them, people who are seeking safety and solace here in Canada.

As many of my colleagues have described, this process is unclear. It is arbitrary and ultimately very discriminatory. We have to ask ourselves why this bill is even before us when we just approved a refugee law a few months ago. What we need now is full implementation and better enforcement of that law.

The government should be less focused on photo ops and demonizing people who come here seeking legitimate refugee status and more focused on enforcing the laws against human smuggling that we already have and giving the RCMP, who are tasked with this job, the resources they need to get the job done.

Our concern is that the bill is more about politics, very divisive and dangerous politics, and less about ensuring an effective and fair refugee and immigration system.

We are not just saying that. We are backed up by the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association, an expert panel at the Centre for Refugee Studies. Those who are experts in international law, in our charter rights here in Canada and in international covenants share our deep concern about the flaws of the bill and the damage it could do certainly to our country's reputation, but much more importantly to individual lives. We are talking about people who are at their most desperate, who are fleeing for their lives.

We think this is an unnecessary bill, a bad bill, a bill that is going to tarnish Canada's reputation and endanger those who need shelter most.

● (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I support the emphasis the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park is placing on the importance of refugees here in Canada.

[English]

I have had the privilege of working in her area as a law student and had the great opportunity to understand some of the communities that she represents.

In terms of refugees, I am given to understand that Canada receives a higher proportion of refugees than any other country in the world in terms of our population. People around the world put great stock in our refugee policy. In fact, I was just in Iraq and met people who were concerned about coming to Canada. It is only because we can protect the integrity of our refugee system that we can open our doors as we do. I ask the member to respond to that.

Without the abuses that have happened, does she understand that we can therefore protect the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of true refugees who would come to our shores?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what abuses the member is talking about, but I do know that if we look at some of the poorest countries in the world, their number of refugees is far greater than that of Canada. While we may have a smaller population, we certainly have the resources and land mass to be able to accommodate refugees.

I would ask the member, in response to his question, for someone who understands my community and understands the importance of the refugee and immigration system, how can he justify the mandatory detention of children? How can he justify violating international treaties with the bill? These are treaties that we have signed onto and are part of our international commitment.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share many of the concerns of this flawed piece of legislation with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

Earlier in the debate, the member for Toronto Centre suggested that, given the concerns that have been expressed by the Canadian Bar Association, the former chair of the Immigration Refugee Board, and many other legal commentators on this matter, it would be appropriate to have the bill referenced to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I wonder if the member for Parkdale—High Park and her party would support that suggestion from the Liberal Party.

• (1300)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, in analyzing the bill I look to the expertise of those who work in the field of immigration and refugee law: the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Centre for Refugee Studies. All of these organizations have said that the bill is draconian, that it could violate the charter, that it could violate our international commitments, and it is legislation that is not needed given the recent adoption of the refugee bill earlier this year.

I think it would be of great value to the House to have opinion from outside experts to analyze whether this bill would likely be a contravention to the laws that govern our land and international treaties that we have signed.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of the 492 men, women and children who came to Canada on the

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MV Sun Sea, a significant number were indeed children. Ten of those children came to live in London, Ontario. They are sponsored and supported by the Tamil community there. Last Christmas they put on a concert with singing, music, and a nativity scene. Some of them were as young as two and a half years old.

I come back to the member. Why on earth would we ever support a bill that would allow for the incarceration of children?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the Conservatives have against children.

I think it goes down to our essential humanity. If we support families and the value of refugee processes, then we have to understand that these are very draconian measures that could be very harmful to children.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 has a very clear short title: Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act. That sounds right, pertinent and unequivocal. We expect a well thought-out bill that would help our law enforcement agencies catch criminals who are involved in human trafficking, a very serious crime that is punishable by life in prison.

Except for in this title, there is no other mention of smugglers. They vanish just as quickly as they came. There is not another word about them, and the emphasis shifts immediately to refugees, the very victims of the smugglers mentioned in the title. And how are these refugees treated in this bill? They are described as potential terrorists, fleeing criminals or people abusing Canada's goodwill and the hospitality of its institutions.

In fact, the bill seems to be suggesting to Canadians that the current refugee processing legislation is naive. It needs to be updated and reflect the current focus on international terrorism. We quickly realize that the real short title of this bill is something along the lines of "the arbitrary radicalization of the legal treatment of refugees act".

We should not think that we do not already have a law that targets smugglers. This phenomenon was not discovered last week. This criminal act is already punishable by a very severe sentence, the most severe sentence in fact: life in prison.

Why does this bill focus on refugees? Why does it want to make them guilty of other people's crimes?

What is a refugee? Must I remind the House? From the outset, we are talking about almost unbearable situations. We are talking about men, women and children who have only one simple hope left. They have just spent several weeks at sea in unsanitary conditions. They are put on unsafe boats with no guarantee of safety. When they finally reach land, they often do not have passports or any money. They have basically been denied their human dignity and who has done this? The smugglers that this bill supposedly wants to bring to justice. However, these smugglers cannot be found. They are still abroad where they continue to engage in illegal practices. In return for large amounts of money, these smugglers lead less fortunate, persecuted people who do not feel safe in their own country to believe that they will have a better life in a developed country. Those people are victims and nothing more. They are in the most vulnerable state possible.

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What is the Conservative government proposing we do to lighten the load for these victims whose courage and determination brought them to Canada? The Conservatives are proposing that we persecute them even further by treating them like criminals and looking for terrorists among children. Who will be given the right to do this? A government institution that is well-equipped with experts? The RCMP? No. To our great surprise, it is the Minister of Immigration who would have this right. I would like to ask why.

Why would a minister be granted such power? It is completely unjustified. It would be a backward move, a legal anomaly that would be fundamentally unCanadian. In this country, we do not place such a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of a minister.

From a strictly legal point of view, this could violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill C-4 could be contrary to section 9 of the charter, which pertains to arbitrary detention. By creating two categories of refugees, Bill C-4 could violate section 15 of the Charter, which pertains to equality before the law. The NDP is of the opinion that Canadians do not feel there is any justification for questioning such things. The charter is a building block of our state. If we circumvent the charter, we are circumventing democracy.

If I may, I would like to give an example to show just how weak the government's argument in favour of Bill C-4 is. I hope I have the Conservatives' attention. I repeat, the NDP takes its legislative responsibilities very seriously, especially when it comes to the safety of Canadians. That is our duty. Consider the case of a refugee who has been detained as a designated foreign national under Bill C-4, but decides to exercise his rights and take the government to court over these violations of his basic charter rights. It must be understood that this person was incarcerated without any valid reason whatsoever. Well, there is a provision, in section 1, that allows reasonable limits on Canada's basic rights and freedoms. That said, the burden of proof lies with the government, which must prove that a rule of law that it is adopting can override the charter.

● (1305)

Such exceptions are justifiable only within reasonable and demonstrable limits in the context of a free and democratic society. As proof, in *R. v. Oakes* in 1986, a judge described very clearly what has since become known as the Oakes test, to determine whether such limitations on basic rights are justifiable in the context of a free and democratic society.

How does the Conservative government plan to prove that 12-month, arbitrary detentions imposed by a ministerial decision will satisfy those criteria? I am referring to the minimal impairment criteria. Will the new legislation the government wants to use to achieve its objective repudiate a charter right in the smallest possible way? Will the limitations on basic rights be proportional to the objective of this new legislation? No. From a legal perspective, that is all untenable. This government cannot justify limiting basic rights like that.

The problem lies in the fact that the smugglers are the real criminals in this matter. And where are they? Are they in the makeshift boats that land on our shores? Do they accompany their victims? No, they are long gone and untouchable. And the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism cannot do anything about it, regardless of the powers he gives himself.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is the only organization capable of cracking down on human smugglers. The RCMP's expertise is a precious and available resource. Its legal role has already been established and there is no risk of abuse. The NDP believes that our police force should be provided with the resources required to go after these criminals. The NDP does not understand what future immigration ministers would accomplish by incarcerating these refugees.

There is no justification for this bill. It does nothing to improve the security of Canada and its population. It punishes people who need us. And, above all, it does not provide the RCMP with the necessary resources and wastes its expertise. The measures are arbitrary. Yes, the problem does need to be resolved. We must pass legislation against smugglers. Unfortunately, the Conservative government is taking the wrong approach. It is proposing to indiscriminately put all refugees through the wringer. It is trying to kill a fly with sledgehammer. What criteria will be used to determine who is a designated foreign national? Why is the bill not clear in this regard? It is unacceptable to introduce such vague legislation.

Canada was not built by giving such absolute discretion to a minister. We realistically expect that laws be rational and predictable. That is not at all the case with Bill C-4, and I am disappointed.

In closing, who are the biggest abusers of the immigration system? It is the Conservatives. Taking their cue from a vague feeling of xenophobia, they are claiming to deal with a scourge, yet they are doing nothing more than playing politics, and rather shamelessly at that. They are trying to appropriate abusive powers, nothing less. They are trying to tarnish Canada's good name. That is unwarranted. Our country is a symbol of justice throughout the world. For millions of people living precariously, Canada is a symbol of hope and humanity.

Does the Conservative government, which incessantly proclaims its patriotism, truly want to diminish our greatest achievement just for a shameful power grab? There are not many countries like Canada, and it is our duty to maintain its generosity, which is legendary and the reason why Canada is held in high regard throughout the world. More powerful nations would give anything for such an illustrious reputation.

● (1310)

[English]

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to my colleague across the way. We do take our duty as legislators very seriously. As a matter of fact, during the last campaign we let Canadians know exactly what our intentions were with regard to this type of legislation.

Not only that, but the response I have received is that we want to maintain Canada's great reputation as a country that takes in more refugees than any other developed country and provides for them every opportunity.

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I have heard from members opposite that the asylum seekers are detained for 12 months before receiving a trial, but I would like to point out that those who are detained have access to legal counsel throughout the process, something that does not occur in every country in the world. As soon as these asylum seekers are determined to be refugees, they are released. If the minister thinks there is a humanitarian concern; for example, people with children or an illness, he has the discretion to make exceptions.

Therefore, can the member opposite explain why the opposition is consistently ignoring these facts when talking about the minister and the level of his discretion within the bill?

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

When refugees arrive in Canada without papers or anything else because they have fled a war-torn country or an absolutely horrific situation, we cannot then put them in preventive detention and tell them that they have the right to legal counsel. Imagine. These people are completely impoverished and have no way of defending themselves against this type of illegal action.

The government likes to brag about welcoming refugees, so why is it that the Canadian Council for Refugees is opposed to this bill? Why are Amnesty International and the Canadian Bar Association both saying the same thing: that this makes no sense?

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, listened to a number of presentations this morning. I have a question for the member as well.

I will quickly set the question up in terms of content. In the 40th Parliament, we introduced this bill, almost identical to the way the bill is today. The opposition parties were very clear that they would not support this at second reading and would not allow it to go to committee so we could have had the exact discussions that the member spoke about where some recommendations from them could have been brought forward.

We have reintroduced pretty much the same bill. I am listening to all these speeches. I am hearing opposition members complain about what the government is trying to do, even though most Canadians support what we are trying to accomplish. I hear nothing in the way of recommendations or suggestions as to how they would make the bill stronger. I would ask them to please give me one or two suggestions.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I said in my speech that it is important to try and do something about human trafficking. The bill, as it stands, only serves to punish refugees who arrive here under the worst possible conditions. If the bill at least contained something about human trafficking and smuggling, of course we could get on board and see what was there. But right now I see absolutely nothing worthwhile in this bill.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very relevant comments.

Why does she think that the government has decided to go after refugees instead of focusing on criminals?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, in the current context, it is clearly simpler and easier to pretend to crack down on human trafficking by targeting the most vulnerable people, who have very little means to defend themselves and assert their rights.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-4. However, I wish it were a bill that would enhance our place and our policies as a forward-looking country. Instead, the bill is the direct opposite. It would move our policies and our place in the world backward, showing a kind of intolerance that we might have seen half a century ago.

The bill is a policy that is built on fear, intolerance, ideology and an avoidance of the serious facts. Laws should be improved, in my view, based on facts and on knowledge of what works.

Bill C-4 is a bill that almost gives the minister dictatorial powers. I will name three particular areas. I am especially concerned about that particular minister.

The bill would authorize the minister to designate as an irregular arrival the arrival in Canada of a group of persons, the result of which is that some of the foreign nationals in the group become designated foreign nationals. It would authorize an officer or the minister to refuse to consider an application for permanent residence. It would provide that a person may not become a permanent resident as long as an application by the minister for cessation of that person's refugee protection is pending.

I outline those points just to show how the bill would basically give the minister almost dictatorial powers. He or she would have a lot of say and a lot of authority over the lives of people who perhaps are thinking of moving to the promised land.

It is a bill that almost certainly, I believe, will be found to violate our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

My colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Louis, summed it up best. I will restate for the record his comments because they cut to the heart of the serious issues in the bill. The member for Lac-Saint-Louis stated:

It [the bill] creates two classes of refugees. One class would be the regular refugee stream. The second class would be denoted by the minister as designated arrivals, which, upon being designated accordingly, would be treated differently. They could be held in detention for up to 12 months.

What is really happening is that the government is categorizing refugees. It is creating classes of refugees for different treatment based on, if we really look at it and read between the lines, the mode of transport the refugee claimants have used to get here. Refugees who come by plane typically would not come in big groups and would not receive the ministerial designation of designated foreign nationals and would not receive the different treatment that is being reserved for designated foreign nationals in this bill.

He concluded by saying:

Refugees who come in groups who will be designated as designated foreign nationals under the act typically will come by ship in squalid conditions. If they come by plane, they are not considered to be designated foreign nationals under the law.

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I think that sums up one of the greatest concerns in the bill.

The long and short of the bill is that, in many cases, Bill C-4 would make victims of the very people that Canada traditionally and historically has tried to help. I find it amazing that the government, which is always talking about the protection of victims, is, in this instance, using ministerial authority and attacking the very victims themselves through Bill C-4. It goes against the kind of traditions and history we have as a country. We are losing our respect around the world by the actions of the bill and the government almost on a daily basis.

• (1320)

For a government that often goes to great lengths to talk about victims, then Bill C-4 exploits victims who are so often victims as a result of human smugglers themselves.

The people who get on these ships get fed a line in their home country. They may be fleeing persecution or war. They are, as I said, fed a line, told a story. They sometimes very innocently get involved and believe they are going to a welcoming country because Canada traditionally was a welcoming country until some of the activities of the current government.

We are a country that is historically seen as a country with the balance of law, protection of rights and freedoms, not a country that makes victims of people who are fleeing persecution or war, or being abused in other ways, but that is what the bill could possibly do. The bill could in fact leave those who come here further exploited by a law and actions perpetuated by the government itself.

Canada has a long deserved reputation as a safe haven for those so deserving of a haven in the world. We are a country of immigrants and a country, to a certain extent, of refugees. The ancestors of many of us in the House came from foreign lands. Mine came from England and Scotland. They came to this country and built a great country that was open to all.

In attempting to deal with a small criminal element, the federal government should be extremely careful and must take the necessary time to ensure that legislation, such as Bill C-4, accomplishes what it intends while respecting both our international obligations and domestic laws. I believe the bill seriously fails to do that.

As the parliamentary secretary said a moment ago, the bill was introduced in the last Parliament. It was opposed in the last Parliament by the opposition and opposed strenuously. We would think that a reasonable government would have taken that as a message that there were some problems with the bill, would have taken it back and met with other groups across the country and tried to change it and recognize some of the concerns. We cannot throw out everything the opposition says. We have some reasoned opinion too, and the government should have listened to that, been concerned about it and changed the bill accordingly.

In response to the bill, the Liberal Party has raised a number of concerns that we believe need to be addressed. My colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Louis, outlined those concerns and they are on the record. We are committed as a party to finding pragmatic and evidence-based solutions to human smuggling. We reject this draconian and backward piece of legislation that targets legitimate

refugee claimants and not the real criminals, the human smugglers themselves.

As I said earlier, the bill is really nothing more than crass fearmongering and we cannot support the bill as currently constituted.

• (1325)

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the record. I appreciate the fact that the member is making his presentation and speech on how he feels about Bill C-4 but he does need to ensure he is delivering what is factually in the bill.

He indicated that it would create two streams of refugees. In fact, that is not the case. The individuals who are on these ships are not refugees. They are not refugees until they have actually gone through the process and have either qualified or not qualified through the process. Therefore, in no way, shape or form are there two sets of refugees based on the bill. It is a very factual bill and the member needs to ensure he is correct on it.

I do want to ask him one question. He indicated that the government was not prepared to listen in the 40th Parliament with respect to the bill. I would say to him that if he looks at Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, and looks at Bill C-35, the crooked consultant act, he will find that we listened to all the parties on the opposite side of the House and came back to the House with both those bills passed unanimously.

Why will he not try to help us get the bill passed at second reading and get it into committee so we can talk about it?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary can try to allege in the detail certain things, but the fact is the net result at the end of the day, because of the actions in the bill, is there will be two classes of refugees.

As I have said in my remarks, the Liberal Party believes very seriously that there has to be a serious discussion on the bill. The bill is based on fearmongering, mainly, and the reaction to what happened in one ship and needs to be more seriously thought out before it becomes law.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding his comments about the fact that the bill would create two classes of refugees.

What does the member believe the effect would be on refugees and also on Canada's image around the world?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the impact or effect on refugees is very clear. As I outlined in my speech, with one class of refugees, the bill, as sponsored by the Government of Canada, would be made victims of the very people that Canada has traditionally welcomed as a safe haven.

It is kind of guided on the possibility that we would be going after human smugglers. That is not necessarily so. The human smugglers may be getting off the hook, but the people who have been encouraged either to get on a boat or whatever by these human smugglers and abused in that way, in terms of their financial and human resources, are themselves, rather than us helping them as a country, going to be made the victims. That is the bottom line. That is the long and the short of it.

• (1330)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his presentation, the member mentioned that some of the people on these ships are fleeing prosecution.

Is Canada the destination and is Canada a country that should providing safe haven for those people fleeing prosecution in their country? Is that the kind of immigration we want to establish?

The member said that people on these ships are fleeing prosecution. Is Canada, in his mind, supposed to be the kind of country that is providing a safe haven for criminals and criminal organizations trying to escape justice in their own countries?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I would think that *Hansard* would have that word correct. It is really “persecution”. However, with my Island accent, it might have sounded different for the member for Yukon, who is so far away up there in the chamber.

Certainly we want to help people who are fleeing persecution or wars in other countries. That has been our tradition. We have always been an open haven and a welcoming country and operated on good laws. This, as I said in my remarks, would move us back to a different time, to a less open haven as a country—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have before us a bill that is rather questionable in several respects. It is also a bill that, unfortunately, demonstrates some very worrying trends we see in this government.

This bill was criticized in its previous, but similar, incarnation by a number of experts and organizations for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons that often came up was the fact that this bill does not respect our international obligations. Amnesty International is now saying that Bill C-4 does not respect Canada's obligations in terms of human rights and refugee protection, and that it would lead to serious violations of the rights of refugees and migrants.

This illustrates some trends. It is very clear that this government is not always strong when it comes to respecting its international obligations and commitments. Take, for example, the Kyoto protocol or the treatment of Omar Khadr, to name just two. Then we wonder why Canada's reputation is suffering in the world. These issues play a big part in that.

In this particular case, both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees are being violated. And we are not the only ones saying that. Experts such as the Canadian Bar Association agree. I would like to read a quote from a Canadian Bar Association report about Bill C-49 that also applies to Bill C-4:

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The denial of detention reviews breaches the section 9 and section 10 Charter protections against arbitrary detention and right to prompt review of detention. The provisions for mandatory unreviewable detention and for denial of access to permanent resident status or travel documents conflict with Canada's obligations [and I would like to emphasize “Canada's obligations”] under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Association goes even further, and I quote:

The Bill C-49 mandatory detention provisions (and other punitive measures) would also violate Article 31 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention, ratified by Canada and more than 180 countries, sets out obligations for the treatment of refugees seeking protection within their borders. Article 31 prohibits the imposition of penalties against refugees on account of their illegal entry or presence without authorization.

Yet that is exactly what this bill would do.

We know that this government does not always have the utmost respect for experts, but I think it is important to continue quoting the experts from the Canadian Bar Association. They also point out that this bill violates Article 28 of the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees concerning the right to a travel document.

• (1335)

Finally, and to finish quoting this report, the bill also violates the obligation under Article 34 of the United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees, which states, “The Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings”, and the duration of such proceedings.

What is more, in this bill we see the government's very typical tendency to arbitrariness. The minister gives himself power, as my hon. colleague was saying earlier, that is arbitrary and lacks transparency. The proposed detentions are essentially arbitrary detentions.

The third tendency we see in this bill is the refusal to listen to expert opinion. I believe there are 80 different agencies that had something to say about the previous bill, which was identical to this one. Every one of them, in one way or another, indicated their dissatisfaction, their problems and their serious concerns with the bill, but the government is not taking that into consideration.

One last problem with this bill is the fact that it claims to be about punishing smugglers. It does not punish smugglers; it punishes refugees. It creates two categories of refugees because a refugee arriving by plane is not the same as a refugee arriving by boat.

We know that people who fish have developed nets with which they can catch tuna and let dolphins go free. In this bill, we get the impression that if the smugglers are the dolphins and the refugees are the tuna in this analogy, then the government is casting a large net to catch refugees and let the smugglers go free.

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From the simple standpoint of respecting international conventions—let alone the other problems with this bill—this legislative measure is a disaster. Canada's image has suffered greatly over the past few years and this is certainly not going to help. Far from it.

● (1340)

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly understand that under parliamentary procedure and the fact that we have three parties in the House of Commons we will not to see eye to eye on every issue, but when members speak to an issue, it should be from the perspective of clarity. I am hearing continuously both from the member and those who have spoken before her this image they want to portray that there are two streams of refugees. She is making assumptions that are completely unjustified.

The fact is that individuals who come on those ships are not refugees. They do not land and immediately have refugee status. They must go through a process like every other individual who lands in this country and claims refugee status has to go through.

People who have been declared refugees by the United Nations, who are not in this country but are waiting in other countries, deserve and have earned the right for a new life. We offer that in Canada. Those are the people who come here to live and lead a better life.

Why do the member and her party continue to try to misinterpret what the bill means? Please clarify for me why she misinterprets what the bill means?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to note that the answers given by my colleague across the floor all presume that these are not legitimate refugees, but rather bogus refugees. The organization Rethink Refugees reminds us that under international law, arriving by boat is completely legal. Individuals cannot be charged simply because they arrived by boat. It also reminds us that the vast majority of passengers are legitimate asylum seekers. But instead of giving them the benefit of the doubt and treating them like people who are suffering, which is what they are, the government is reversing the burden of proof.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a public safety measure. Invoking Omar Khadr as a method of trying to communicate on this issue is questionable judgment at best. I have a question for the hon. member opposite.

[Translation]

What does the hon. member have to say to Canadians who want to keep their families, their streets and their communities safe?

[English]

A simple question.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to tell Canadians, including myself, people I know and my family who want to keep our streets safe, is that the source of crime in Canada is not boatloads of refugees armed to the teeth who are coming here to

attack us. That is just not the reality. I find it rather odd that some people automatically think it is a criminal matter when refugees come to seek assistance from Canada.

I would also point out that Canada is but one country in the world. Its security comes from global security. Helping refugees and showing compassion for other countries will only benefit Canada's security in the long run.

● (1345)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is enough time for a short question and a brief answer.

The hon. member for d'Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in her speech, my colleague emphasized the fact that expert reports state that the bill does not comply with the law, for example. I would like to know if there is a reason why the Conservative government, before introducing this bill, did not pay heed to what the experts said?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues for their questions, something I did not do before.

This is indeed rather disturbing. However, as I said in my presentation, this government seems to have a tendency to pay little attention to expert opinion. In this case, I quoted at length from the Canadian Bar Association report, because I thought it was important. I do not think the Association can be accused of being biased and its comments should have been taken into account.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the debate in this House on Bill C-4, there are some very obvious themes that are arising. One of the central themes that we keep coming back to is the issue of fundamental human rights and freedoms. I think that the Canadian public and we ourselves in this chamber can reasonably expect some disagreements between members of different parties. Sometimes those disagreements can be profound disagreements.

However, it saddens me that we disagree on these very issues of fundamental human rights and freedoms. It seems to me that we in this chamber should not have to be debating whether or not everything we do, every bill we consider, should be based on, or consistent with, principles that human beings are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms. One would have thought, or at least hoped, that we were past that.

We have, after all, a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that forms part of the Constitution of this country. It recognizes, as I hope we all do, that certain rights and freedoms are not conferred just by way of Canadian citizenship but are universal. In the words of the charter, they belong to everyone.

Long before our charter, we were signatories to the charter of the United Nations. As that charter says, we became signatories as a result of our determination:

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war [...], and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

What follows, of course, is our signature on a number of United Nations conventions and declarations that are intended to put these beliefs into practice. So profoundly certain are we of the legitimacy of such fundamental human rights and freedoms that we are even prepared from time to time to send Canadian men and women around the world and into war to protect people, not just Canadians but people of all citizenship, who are denied such rights and suffer as a result.

We all know there are many places around the world where people are denied such rights and freedoms, and are subject to discrimination, persecution, violence and even wrongful prosecution. From time to time, people end up on our shores, seeking safe haven or asylum from more persecution, understanding that this is a country known to the world as a place where one can enjoy such rights and freedoms in peace.

One would hope that we respond to such people in a manner consistent with our explicit commitments to respect fundamental rights and freedoms, the most obvious of these commitments being our own charter of course but also, most relevant to Bill C-4, the commitments we have made to the international community about the appropriate treatment of refugees and, indeed, children.

However, Bill C-4 strays from those commitments, some of which have governed or guided us for 60 years. I would like to point today to a few parts of this bill where I think this is the case.

Bill C-4 places into the hands of the minister the power to create a second or, in the terms of the bill, a designated class of refugee claimants. There are very few criteria or parameters made explicit in the bill for making such a designation, leaving very broad discretion to the minister and therefore little accountability for the decision. This is of great importance because of the profound implications of being placed into the designated group. Mandatory detention follows such designation.

Section 7 of our charter says:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

Which is to say, if we are going to deprive someone of life, liberty or security, we better have a really good reason for doing so and a really sound process for doing so, a reason and process that enjoys the consensus of all Canadians.

• (1350)

The good reason and the sound process do not exist under Bill C-4. One of the few explicit reasons the minister can invoke the designation is out of suspicion that those claiming refugee status have already been victimized by a smuggler.

Further, the detentions are group detentions, which is to say that the bill does not require an assessment of the threat that any individual refugee claimant may pose. Absent such an assessment, the detention of everybody means, at a minimum, the arbitrary detention of somebody. Such arbitrary detention raises the violation

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of section 9 of our charter; that is, the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.

The fact that there is no review of the detention for at least 12 months raises further issues. Section 10 of the charter requires that everyone arrested or detained has the right to: be informed promptly of the reasons therefore; retain and instruct counsel and to be informed of that right; and to have the validity of the detention determined within 48 hours and to be released if the detention is not lawful.

To return to an earlier point, the detention for in fact seeking asylum, and that we need to keep in mind just what triggers this detention, simply a claim for refugee status, seems also to run afoul of the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees, which says:

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who...present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

Article 31 of the refugee convention further states:

The Contracting States shall not apply to the movements of such refugees restrictions other than those which are necessary—

Of course, as previously discussed, the designation process does not provide for an assessment of necessary restrictions of movement for individuals as the movement of everybody in the designated group is restricted simply as a matter of being so designated.

Sadly, the denial of rights and freedoms to those in designated groups extends beyond their recognition as a refugee by this country.

First, Bill C-4 would prevent designated refugees from applying for temporary or permanent resident status for five years and further, prevents them from obtaining refugee travel documents for five years. Again, this would seem to breach the refugee convention to which we are a signatory, which provides that the contracting states shall issue to refugees lawfully staying in their territory travel documents for the purpose of travel outside their territory unless compelling reasons of national security or public order otherwise require.

Second, Bill C-4 would impose on refugees from a designated group a continuing obligation to report to an officer to answer questions and provide information or documents as so requested. This kind of surveillance outside of the criminal justice system is unheard of in Canada. Further, it must be remembered that this kind of surveillance under Bill C-4 flows from the very arbitrary designation in the first place.

The sum total of the foregoing analysis of Bill C-4, albeit cursory and partial as it is, goes to my final point.

Bill C-4, if we are to believe its title, is intended to counter human smuggling. Throughout this entire debate I cannot recall any member of the House making the claim that human smuggling is not a serious offence, that it is not a practice that should be defeated, and that offenders should not be subject to very serious punishment. Human smuggling is after all the exploitation for profit and/or other nefarious advantage of people who are most vulnerable, and in most need of protection.

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The perversity of this legislation is that it heaps punishment on those very same people that the human smugglers are exploiting. A further twist to that perversity is that not only does the bill promise harsh treatment for those seeking asylum in this country, a country where they come in the hopes of being able to enjoy the rights and freedoms that they could not access at home, but it proposes to deny these asylum seekers the very rights and freedoms that define this country for ourselves and in the international community, and make us so proud to be citizens of it.

Somebody gave the bill a very fine and aspirational title, and then things went very seriously wrong. If it is the belief of the government that provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act are insufficient to deal with human smuggling, then I would urge the government to bring back before the House a bill that punishes human smugglers, not those that they exploit.

• (1355)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member continues to misrepresent the purpose of detention. We have heard time and again that detention is for one purpose, and that is to identify who these individuals are if they turn up without documents, as is almost always the case on these vessels. The authorities must have the time to properly identify these people and the bill provides that time.

I wonder why the member seems to be saying that we should let anyone turn up on our shores to roam our streets and communities without first knowing who they are and what kind of threat they may pose to Canada. Could he please answer that question?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems to understate the limitations that the detention imposes on people. In this country, we take very seriously the right of everyone to liberty, life and security, but the bill would not respect those rights. Holding people, including children, the elderly, the disabled and those who so obviously pose no threat to this country, in detention for a minimum of a year is a breach of fundamental human rights and freedoms and entirely unnecessary.

I would suggest that the government put forward a bill that would find a way to manage and administer large groups of refugee claimants who come to this country in a way that respects rights and freedoms.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was a little surprised in terms of the Conservative member's question. I was under the understanding, based on what the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism said, that the primary reason for this particular bill is to target the profiteers, the smugglers.

Having said that, I ask the member if, in his opinion, he believes that Bill C-4 would have more of an impact on the profiteers and smugglers, or would he agree with the Liberal Party in saying that the real impact would be in making victims of the refugees.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, as reluctant as I am to agree with the Liberal Party, I think I do in this case and I will have to admit so.

The reasons for the detention are, frankly, quite elusive. They are not there in the bill and they are at the minister's discretion. It seems entirely arbitrary and vague at best.

I think it is most certainly the case that what is happening here under the bill is that we would end up mistreating refugee claimants to this country, presumably, if I am to follow the logic of the title, in an effort to somehow get at the human smugglers. However, I see nothing in the bill that in fact provides a means for dealing with the smuggling itself.

• (1400)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are mobilizing our troops to go to Libya, to teach the world about democracy and supposedly to bring in better practices. What will we fight in countries with a dictatorship? We will fight everything that is arbitrary, all the random acts of people who grab power.

Are we not heading down a very slippery slope?

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, in my speech, I tried to point out that this is a country that is, in fact, putting our forces into war zones around the world, presumably for the purpose of protecting the fundamental human rights and freedoms that we are speaking of here today. There is a very profound fundamental inconsistency between that language and those actions that the Conservatives are talking about and their consideration of human rights and freedoms in the bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, gives new latitude to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism when it comes to refugees and newcomers. The bill gives the minister new discretionary powers over the legal system as it applies to refugees and it limits the rights of newcomers.

According to the bill, the minister has the power to designate as an "irregular arrival" the arrival in Canada of a group of persons, and then to identify some members of that group as "designated foreign nationals". The bill restricts the rights of these foreign nationals who want to receive permanent resident status in Canada by means of the following measures: first, the right of an officer or the minister to reject an application for permanent residence from a designated foreign national; second, the power to detain a permanent resident or a foreign national because there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the person concerned is inadmissible on grounds of serious criminality or organized criminality; third, detention rules and a review procedure that are specific to the detention of certain designated foreign nationals; fourth, the provision stating that a person cannot become a permanent resident as long as an application by the minister for cessation of that person's refugee protection is pending; fifth, for the purposes of determining the penalty for certain offences, the addition to the list of aggravating factors of the fact that, as a result of the offence committed, the life or safety of any person was endangered; and, lastly, the extension of the time for instituting proceedings by way of summary conviction from six months to five years.

In addition to arbitrarily and inadequately amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, this bill also amends the Marine Transportation Security Act by imposing more severe sentences on people who fail to provide the required information before a vessel enters Canadian waters, people who fail to comply with ministerial orders, and people who provide erroneous or misleading information. The bill also creates a new offence related to vessels that fail to comply with ministerial orders. It also amends the existing act by authorizing the enforcement of rules governing the disclosure of certain information in order to ensure the safety or security of Canada and Canadians.

I would like to express my concern about the concepts of “regular arrival” and “designated foreign nationals”. The minister can deem the arrival of a group of refugees to be an “irregular arrival” if he believes that examinations cannot be done in a timely manner, if he suspects that the people were smuggled in exchange for money, or if he suspects that a criminal organization or terrorist group is involved in the smuggling. The people in the group that the minister deems to be “designated foreign nationals” will be subject to a legally questionable system of justice. First, we must consider whether this concept violates section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which pertains to equal rights, or article 31 of the UN convention relating to the status of refugees, which prohibits states from imposing penalties on refugees for their illegal entry or presence in the country.

Article 31(1) states: “The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.”

Bill C-4 may also be contrary to section 9 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which pertains to arbitrary detention.

• (1405)

This section states, “Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.” In contrast, the bill allows for the arbitrary detention of designated foreign nationals for a period of 12 months. Furthermore, in terms of procedure, decisions related to claims made by designated foreign nationals cannot be appealed to the refugee appeal division. This provision is discriminatory and may even contravene the UN convention relating to the status of refugees.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the minister can retroactively confer the legal status of designated foreign national on anyone who has arrived in Canada since March 31, 2009, which means that the *Ocean Lady* and *Sun Sea* passengers could be subject to this precarious legal status.

This bill, which is supposed to punish individuals who engage in human trafficking, is completely inappropriate in that we already have legislation that imposes a life sentence for people convicted of such activities. This bill creates a second class of refugees who are denied permanent residence, temporary residence permits, the right to apply for permanent residence based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, and, finally, refugee travel documents. It creates inequality before the law, simply because the minister has

identified these people as designated foreign nationals based solely on the mode of transportation they used to enter Canada.

Bill C-4 to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which was introduced not by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism but by the Minister of Public Safety, shows the government's willingness to pursue an ideological security policy that is detrimental to refugees and newcomers.

Under the guise of working to combat human smuggling, this bill penalizes refugees who are already in difficult situations and who have chosen to come to Canada simply to improve their living conditions. NDP members rejected this bill when it was introduced in the previous Parliament as Bill C-49 and they will do so again in this Parliament because the bill is inadequate, it violates international law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it tarnishes Canada's international image as a welcoming country.

• (1410)

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate on this bill and there are some facts that should be addressed.

First, Canada has a very generous immigration and refugee system. The majority of the people arriving in this country arrive as accepted applicants for permanent residency. There are a lot of refugees from different parts of the world who come under a UN program.

This legislation is aimed at people who use smugglers and at smugglers whose business is bringing people to this country illegally. There is a lot of discussion around the rights of people.

I have question for the hon. member. Do the citizens of this country have a right to protection? Does the government and Parliament not have an obligation to protect the country's borders and to protect our citizens?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. Canada has the right to be protected from smugglers, from the real criminals. Canada has the right to invest in the RCMP to give police the means to conduct investigations and arrest smugglers. However, Canadians also have the right to hear from the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Centre for Refugee Studies and the Canadian Bar Association, so that the laws and regulations respect the rights of Canadians.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many organizations have said that the bill contravenes the charter. Our party leader has suggested that we seek the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada as to the constitutionality of this bill.

Does the member agree with this idea?

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

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In response to what I have heard from the other side of the House, all scenarios are on the table. It is important that the government listen to the opposition and especially to organizations such as the Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International, the Canadian Bar Association, the Centre for Refugee Studies, and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which give advice on how to improve laws and regulations. It is very important that the proposed bill be improved.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his presentation.

He mentioned problems related to the fact that this bill is not consistent with certain international conventions, particularly United Nations conventions. I would like my colleague to talk about the impact that could have on Canada's image on the world stage.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Canada has always been perceived by other countries as a welcoming nation, as a very democratic country that gives new arrivals a chance to make their way. If we fail to respect all the laws, charters and advice from the agencies mentioned earlier, I think our reputation as a welcoming nation will be seriously and profoundly tarnished.

• (1415)

[English]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a little bit last minute but I will try to put a couple of thoughts together. I do not think I will take too much time but I will try to resume what has been spoken about.

We have been talking about two classes of refugees, basically the type of bill this is, and we are obviously hearing rhetoric from both sides of the House. However, when members listen to what we have to say, it is normal that we are the ones who are right in this area because the Liberal Party brought in the charter and believe in giving people the rights to which they are entitled.

It is astounding what we hear from the Conservative government. I have a piece of paper with the background of what brought all this to light.

In August, 2010, a total of 492 Tamils arrived on a boat. The time before that, in 2009, 76 Tamils arrived here on a boat. In the last couple of years, we have had about a thousand people who have come on a boat claiming refugee status. Now, all of a sudden it requires a new bill. Every person who has ever come in a boat, any person who has come from Sri Lanka, any person of Tamil background is considered a terrorist. Anybody who has ever been an immigrant, anybody who has ever made a refugee request is considered a criminal. Where is the end in all this?

All this does is create controversy and division, which is typical of what the government does, but most of all, it is supposed to be a cost-conscious type of government and this costs money. All this amount of paper for what? Because the government is saying that criminals are in the boats? Those are not the criminals.

The bill does not address the criminals, the smugglers. So, what are we looking at? There are criminals on the boat, criminals arriving

on the boat and criminals sending the boat. The criminals who are sending the boat from wherever the place of departure is, are not being addressed. However, all of a sudden, anybody who has ever set foot in a boat now becomes a criminal, according to the other side, and anybody associated with wanting to help those people is considered a criminal.

What does that mean? That means that we will need to pay consultants, lawyers and all kinds of people to ensure those supposed criminals, however many there are, will be put in a detention centre and supervised. They will go be uneducated, not being fully utilized for any of the services, and then again it will cost money.

I have examples in my office, representing a riding in an urban centre rampant with immigrants and refugees, of people who come for help. The majority of the refugees who come to my constituency office, and sometimes do pass by my house, come with some of the best family values we could ever imagine. Their kids go to school. They are not out of line. They get great grades. The parents are working at not one job, but two jobs and sometimes three. They are working around the clock because they have come here to make a better life. The life that they have left behind is not the life they wanted, not only for themselves, but for their families. The people across the chamber should realize that those are the people we are talking about.

Canada brings in 300,000 people every year and 40,000 or 50,000 of those are refugees. Is the bill, by trying to penalize the people on the boats, like we said, creating a separate class, worth the cost?

There would be additional cost involved afterward when we consider the logistics of trying to accommodate these people. We would be putting them in a detention centre for up to a year, and some people are saying up to five years. I am not the expert so I would not be able to say how much that would cost, but we have had numbers up to a couple of billion dollars, which is a thousand million, in case somebody is wondering how much that is.

• (1420)

Hearing the rhetoric from all sides of the House, eventually someone will dispute the bill in a court of law, which will cost money. The Conservative lawyers will get rich and probably pay independent contractors \$90,000 a day. Again, this will create controversy and division and for what? We still have not arrested or incarcerated a single smuggler.

There are different ways to address this. I am told that the immigration minister has nothing to do with the bill, but the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is defending it. The government is tossing the bill around, saying it is a question of security, but the parliamentary secretary is defending the bill. I feel sorry for him because he is a good guy and a good parliamentarian too. It is very difficult to address the validity of the bill.

I am a big promoter of sending a bill to committee to try to make it better, but there does not seem to be a willingness to make the bill better because it is a failure from the start. As my leader and our critic have said in previous discussions, the bill is totally against the Charter of Freedoms and Rights. As an accountant, that tells me it will cost dollars, so again the Conservative government does nothing better than to spend money on professionals, contractors and independent people.

My assessment is that the bill is flawed from the outset. I know there was an attempt to amend it. I know the bill fails to achieve its stated principle of cracking down on human smugglers and I am not sure if the government has made any attempts to make that amendment before it goes to committee. It targets legitimate refugee claimants and does not give a chance to the poor people who arrive on a boat to apply for temporary or permanent residency or acquire any benefits. It is a total make-work type of project. It is exploratory to try to see how much we can abuse the people coming here.

I am not sure how we can fix the bill before it is sent to committee, but I would like to stop it in its tracks so it does not go to committee. Again, I am apprehensive as to the costs. In my constituency the number of refugee board judges who have not been named and Conservatives can use that money to appoint more refugee board judges and maybe speed up the process of refugee claimants, so if there are illegal or illegitimate refugees we could process them quite quickly.

We see examples across the world where countries have tried to use a system where they are not open to welcoming refugees. Instead, they will go get their own refugees. We saw that in some of the Nordic countries where it did not work. Again, I do not see how that will help. Canada has always been a welcoming country. Looking around the chamber, we are people from different backgrounds and different nationalities.

I do not see how the bill will change or better Canada in the future. If we are scared of a couple of people who will come here by boat as opposed to illegal refugees who cannot come by plane, train, or walk through the border, I am not so sure that via the boat is much more of a threat than any other mode of transportation.

• (1425)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a wonderful reputation internationally for welcoming refugees. My parents are immigrants. In fact, my father was a refugee in 1956 during the revolution when he stood against Soviet tanks.

The hon. members on the opposite side do not want to understand that perhaps smugglers are what we are trying to target, not refugees. We continue to welcome refugees and we continue to have a wonderful international reputation doing so.

Perhaps the hon. member might be aware that the folks who come here with smugglers are working two, three or four jobs in order to pay off their smuggling fees and the only people benefiting or profiting are the smugglers. They are the ones who are demeaning people who are trying to come to our country. They are the ones who are robbing them of their dignity.

Government Orders

I would encourage members opposite to join with us to help folks who are coming to Canada and genuinely seeking refugee status. Does the hon. member have some comments on that?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I think the member stated that it was her father who came across. Had he come on a boat, he would not be a refugee, based on the legislation. He would not be able to make a refugee claim, based on the fact that he arrived by boat.

With respect to smuggling, all we are introducing is minimum sentencing and passing a bill to increase the legal sanctions against smuggling immigrants. That is all we need.

Do we need a separate piece of legislation? I am not so sure we need that.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague was here when Jean Chrétien took the Clarity Act to the Supreme Court to get clarification that it was constitutional. NDP members are saying quite clearly to the government that if it firmly believes that the bill is appropriate and constitutionally valid, it should take the bill to the Supreme Court before the bill comes to committee and get the Supreme Court decision.

I can only assume it does not want to do that because it may not like the answer.

In fairness to the government, this is rather sweeping legislation. I remember quite clearly that just prior to the war we turned away an entire shipload of Jewish people fleeing Nazism because they did not have the proper documents. There was anti-Semitism in the world, and we turned them away.

I am an immigrant myself. I was born in Holland, and my parents were welcomed by the Canadian family. Many people in this House, in this Senate and in this country who work for the government come from other countries, and we want to make sure that people who are legitimate have the opportunity.

I understand the government's concerns, when a ship does arrive, about the costs and the burdens it places on many of the provinces. In Halifax we get a fair number of immigrants smuggling in on the container ships and so forth.

However, my two quick questions are these: does the member support the bill going to the Supreme Court, and why is the government targeting the most innocent in the world of today?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I am not as old as the member is, so I was not here for the Clarity Act, but I want to thank the member for having thought that I was here for such a long time.

Basically I do not understand why the government would not refer the bill to the Supreme Court. It would cost less, but we are trying to make other people rich, I suppose, and that is the only way the government does business.

Second, in terms of why the government is targeting the most vulnerable, it is because they are not the people who vote for the Conservatives. That is the only thing I can think of.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pack five little points into my brief question.

Government Orders

First, my colleague asked where it will end. I think it will end if he reads the bill, because he misstates significant provisions of it. Yes, the captains of the boats would be penalized. Yes, those who launch the boats would be penalized.

Second, he misses the point completely. We are trying to protect the reputation of Canada as a safe haven for refugees. It is only when we take these steps can we continue to do so.

I have met with people in Iraq and Pakistan and Afghan refugees who laud our reputation. Viktor Frankl said freedom without responsibility is dangerous to the Auschwitz survivor. We need to take these measures to protect our country as a safe haven.

I ask my friend to please read the bill.

• (1430)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if there is a question in there. I will read the bill again on the weekend, and I will get back to the member.

However, I want to make one thing very clear: just the fact that the bill exists would not prevent this country from having any criminals. This is not about criminals. It is about making new criminals out of people who are not criminals. That is the point.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

APPENDIX

**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS WITH THEIR
CONSTITUENCIES, PROVINCE OF CONSTITUENCY
AND POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS;
COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE,
THE MINISTRY AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**

CHAIR OCCUPANTS

The Speaker

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

The Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole

MS. DENISE SAVOIE

The Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. BARRY DEVOLIN

The Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. BRUCE STANTON

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

MS. CHRIS CHARLTON

MS. JUDY FOOTE

HON. ROB MERRIFIELD

MR. THOMAS MULCAIR

HON. GORDON O'CONNOR

HON. PETER VAN LOAN

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	Alberta	CPC
Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	Ontario	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	Ontario	CPC
Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	Nunavut	Nunavut	CPC
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	British Columbia	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	Ontario	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	Ontario	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	Ontario	NDP
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	New Brunswick	CPC
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	Ontario	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	Ontario	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	Alberta	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	Alberta	CPC
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	Saskatchewan	CPC
Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	Ontario	NDP
Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester— Musquodoboit Valley	Nova Scotia	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	New Brunswick	CPC
Ashton, Niki	Churchill	Manitoba	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	Ontario	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	British Columbia	NDP
Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	Québec	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	Québec	NDP
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	Ontario	CPC
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	Manitoba	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Ontario	Lib.
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	Québec	BQ
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Ontario	Lib.
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	Alberta	CPC
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	Québec	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	Québec	CPC
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	Northwest Territories	NDP
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	Manitoba	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	Québec	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	Québec	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	Québec	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	Saskatchewan	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Boivin, Françoise	Gatineau	Québec	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	Québec	NDP
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	Saskatchewan	CPC
Boulerice, Alexandre	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	Québec	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine	Hochelaga	Québec	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean	Québec	NDP
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	Ontario	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	Saskatchewan	CPC
Brisson, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Brosseau, Ruth Ellen	Berthier—Maskinongé	Québec	NDP
Brown, Gordon	Leeds—Grenville	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	Ontario	CPC
Bruinooog, Rod	Winnipeg South	Manitoba	CPC
Butt, Brad	Mississauga—Streetsville	Ontario	CPC
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	Ontario	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	Alberta	CPC
Cannan, Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	British Columbia	CPC
Carmichael, John	Don Valley West	Ontario	CPC
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	Québec	NDP
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	Ontario	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	Ontario	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	Québec	NDP
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	Nova Scotia	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu	Pickering—Scarborough East	Ontario	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	Ontario	CPC
Choquette, François	Drummond	Québec	NDP
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	Ontario	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	Ontario	NDP
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	Saskatchewan	CPC
Cleary, Ryan	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	Newfoundland and Labrador	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Ontario	CPC
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Québec	Lib.
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh	Ontario	NDP
Côté, Raymond	Beauport—Limoilou	Québec	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Québec	Lib.
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	British Columbia	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	British Columbia	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	Ontario	CPC
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	British Columbia	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	British Columbia	NDP
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	Québec	NDP
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	Ontario	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	Ontario	CPC
Devolin, Barry, The Acting Speaker	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Ontario	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	Ontario	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Québec	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	Québec	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	British Columbia	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	Québec	NDP
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	Alberta	CPC
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	Québec	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	British Columbia	CPC
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Ontario	Lib.
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	Alberta	NDP
Dusseau, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	Québec	NDP
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	Ontario	CPC
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Associate Minister of National Defence	Vaughan	Ontario	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	British Columbia	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	British Columbia	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	Ontario	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Transport)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	Manitoba	CPC
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	Québec	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	Québec	NDP
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	British Columbia	Lib.
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	Ontario	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Ontario	CPC
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Québec	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	British Columbia	NDP
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	Québec	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	Québec	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Gill, Pam	Brampton—Springdale	Ontario	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	Manitoba	CPC
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	New Brunswick	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	New Brunswick	CPC
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	Alberta	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Saskatchewan	Lib.
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	Ontario	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Ontario	CPC
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	Québec	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	Ontario	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	British Columbia	CPC
Groguihé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	Québec	NDP
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	Alberta	CPC
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	Ontario	NDP
Harris, Jack	St. John's East	Newfoundland and Labrador	NDP
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	British Columbia	CPC
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	Québec	NDP
Hawn, Hon. Laurie	Edmonton Centre	Alberta	CPC
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	British Columbia	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	Alberta	CPC
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	CPC
Hoepfner, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	Manitoba	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	Ontario	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Ontario	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing	Ontario	NDP
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Ontario	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	Québec	NDP
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	Ontario	CPC
Jean, Brian	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	Alberta	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	British Columbia	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	British Columbia	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Ontario	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	Nova Scotia	CPC
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	Ontario	NDP
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	Alberta	CPC
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	Ontario	CPC
Kerr, Greg	West Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed	Souris—Moose Mountain	Saskatchewan	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Lake, Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry ...	Edmonton—Mill Woods— Beaumont	Alberta	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Manitoba	Lib.
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet— Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	Québec	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	Québec	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	Québec	NDP
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Ontario	CPC
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	Québec	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	Québec	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	New Brunswick	Lib.
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	Québec	NDP
Leef, Ryan	Yukon	Yukon	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	Ontario	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	Ontario	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	Nova Scotia	NDP
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism ...	Willowdale	Ontario	CPC
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	Québec	NDP
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	Ontario	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	Ontario	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	Saskatchewan	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	British Columbia	CPC
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Prince Edward Island ...	Lib.
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave	Oxford	Ontario	CPC
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	Québec	NDP
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	Ontario	NDP
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	Manitoba	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	Ontario	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	Ontario	NDP
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	British Columbia	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	British Columbia	CPC
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Ontario	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	Ontario	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Ontario	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Ontario	Lib.
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson— Cariboo	British Columbia	CPC
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	Ontario	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	Alberta	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	Alberta	CPC
Michaud, Éline	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	Québec	NDP
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound ...	Ontario	CPC
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	British Columbia	CPC
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	New Brunswick	CPC
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	Québec	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	Québec	NDP
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	Québec	BQ
Mulcair, Thomas	Outremont	Québec	NDP
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	British Columbia	Lib.
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	Québec	NDP
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	Ontario	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil-Soulanges	Québec	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	Ontario	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	Ontario	CPC
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval	Québec	NDP
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	Ontario	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	New Brunswick	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	Alberta	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of International Cooperation	Durham	Ontario	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	Ontario	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	Ontario	CPC
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Québec	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	Québec	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	Québec	NDP
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	Alberta	CPC
Péclet, Ève	La Pointe-de-l'Île	Québec	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador	CPC
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm	Québec	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	Québec	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	Québec	BQ
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	Ontario	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Ontario	CPC
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	Québec	NDP
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Rafferty, John	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	Ontario	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	Ontario	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	Alberta	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	Alberta	CPC
Ravignat, Mathieu	Pontiac	Québec	NDP
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	Ontario	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	Alberta	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	Alberta	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	Alberta	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	Ontario	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	Saskatchewan	CPC
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	Québec	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou	Québec	NDP
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	British Columbia	NDP
Savoie, Denise, The Deputy Speaker	Victoria	British Columbia	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	British Columbia	CPC
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Québec	Lib.
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	Saskatchewan	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	Ontario	CPC
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	Ontario	CPC
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	Québec	NDP
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Ontario	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	Prince Edward Island	CPC
Shipley, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Ontario	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	Alberta	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	British Columbia	NDP
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	Ontario	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	Manitoba	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	Manitoba	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	Alberta	CPC
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	Québec	NDP
Stanton, Bruce, The Acting Speaker	Simcoe North	Ontario	CPC
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	British Columbia	NDP
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	Nova Scotia	NDP
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	Alberta	CPC
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	British Columbia	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	Ontario	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	Ontario	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	Ontario	NDP
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	Ontario	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	Manitoba	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	Manitoba	CPC
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tremblay, Jonathan	Montmorency—Charlevoix— Haute-Côte-Nord	Québec	NDP
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	Saskatchewan	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Ontario	CPC
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Québec	Lib.
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	Ontario	CPC
Turnel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	Québec	NDP
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	Manitoba	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	Alberta	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	New Brunswick	CPC
Valeriotte, Frank	Guelph	Ontario	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	Ontario	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	Ontario	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	Saskatchewan	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	Ontario	CPC
Warawa, Mark	Langley	British Columbia	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	Alberta	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	Ontario	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	British Columbia	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	New Brunswick	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	British Columbia	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest	New Brunswick	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	British Columbia	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	Ontario	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversi- fication)	Blackstrap	Saskatchewan	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	Ontario	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	British Columbia	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River	British Columbia	CPC
VACANCY	Toronto—Danforth	Ontario	

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY PROVINCE

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALBERTA (28)		
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	CPC
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	CPC
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	CPC
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	NDP
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	CPC
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	CPC
Hawn, Hon. Laurie	Edmonton Centre	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	CPC
Jean, Brian	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	CPC
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	CPC
Lake, Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	CPC
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	CPC
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	CPC
BRITISH COLUMBIA (36)		
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	NDP
Cannan, Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	CPC
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	NDP
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	CPC
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	CPC
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	CPC
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo	CPC
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	CPC
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	Lib.
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	NDP
Savoie, Denise, The Deputy Speaker	Victoria	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	CPC
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	NDP
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	NDP
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	CPC
Warawa, Mark	Langley	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River	CPC

MANITOBA (14)

Ashton, Niki	Churchill	NDP
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	CPC
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	CPC
Bruinooge, Rod	Winnipeg South	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Transport)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	CPC
Hoepfner, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Lib.
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	CPC
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	CPC

NEW BRUNSWICK (10)

Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.....	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour.....	Lib.
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly.....	Miramichi.....	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche.....	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest.....	CPC

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (7)

Andrews, Scott.....	Avalon	Lib.
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Lib.
Cleary, Ryan	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	NDP
Foote, Judy.....	Random—Burin—St. George's	Lib.
Harris, Jack	St. John's East.....	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls— Windsor.....	Lib.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (1)

Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	NDP
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NOVA SCOTIA (11)

Armstrong, Scott.....	Cumberland—Colchester— Musquodoboit Valley	CPC
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Lib.
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	CPC
Kerr, Greg	West Nova	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	NDP
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	CPC
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West.....	Lib.
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore.....	NDP

NUNAVUT (1)

Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.....	Nunavut.....	CPC
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ONTARIO (105)

Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South.....	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.....	Ajax—Pickering	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	CPC
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	CPC
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Lib.
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Lib.
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	CPC
Brown, Gordon	Leeds—Grenville	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	CPC
Butt, Brad	Mississauga—Streetsville	CPC
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	CPC
Carmichael, John	Don Valley West	CPC
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Oshawa	CPC
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu	Pickering—Scarborough East	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	CPC
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	CPC
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh	NDP
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East	CPC
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	CPC
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	CPC
Devolin, Barry, The Acting Speaker	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	NDP
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Lib.
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	CPC
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Associate Minister of National Defence	Vaughan	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	CPC
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	CPC
Gill, Parm	Brampton—Springdale	CPC
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	NDP
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	NDP
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing	NDP
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Lib.
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	NDP
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	CPC
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	CPC
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	CPC
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave	Oxford	CPC
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	NDP
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Lib.
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	CPC
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	CPC
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of International Cooperation	Durham	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	CPC
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	CPC
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Lib.
Rafferty, John	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	CPC
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	CPC
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	CPC
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Lib.
Shipley, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	CPC
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	NDP
Stanton, Bruce, The Acting Speaker	Simcoe North	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	CPC
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	CPC
VACANCY	Toronto—Danforth	

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (4)

Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Lib.
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Lib.
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	CPC

QUÉBEC (75)

Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	NDP
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	BQ
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	CPC
Boivin, Françoise	Gatineau	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	NDP
Boulerice, Alexandre	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine	Hochelaga	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean	NDP
Brosseau, Ruth Ellen	Berthier—Maskinongé	NDP
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	NDP
Choquette, François	Drummond	NDP
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Lib.
Côté, Raymond	Beauport—Limoilou	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Lib.
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	NDP
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	NDP
Dusseau, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	NDP
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Lib.
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	NDP
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	CPC
Groguhé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	NDP
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	NDP
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	NDP
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	CPC
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	NDP
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	NDP
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	NDP
Michaud, Élane	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	NDP
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	NDP
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	NDP
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	BQ
Mulcair, Thomas	Outremont	NDP
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil—Soulanges	NDP
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval	NDP
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	NDP
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Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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Turnel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	NDP

SASKATCHEWAN (14)

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Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	CPC
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	CPC
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Lib.
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed	Souris—Moose Mountain	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	CPC
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	CPC
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification)	Blackstrap	CPC

YUKON (1)

Leef, Ryan	Yukon	CPC
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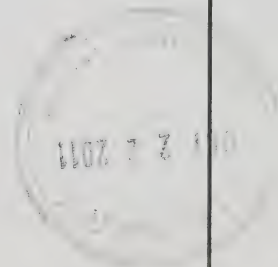
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41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, September 26, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 26, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1105)

[*English*]

LIBYA

Hon. Peter MacKay (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That, standing in solidarity with those seeking freedom in Libya, the House adopted Government motions on March 21 and June 14, 2011, authorizing all necessary measures, including the use of the Canadian Armed Forces and military assets in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973; that given the current military situation and the success of National Transitional Council (NTC) and anti-Gaddafi forces to date, the House supports an extension of up to three months of the involvement of the Canadian Armed Forces operating with NATO in accordance with the legal mandate from the UNSC Resolution 1973; that the House continues to support Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law; that the House deplores the violence committed by the previous regime against the Libyan people, including the alleged use of rape as a weapon of war; that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence shall remain seized of Canada's activities under UNSC Resolution 1973 and in the rebuilding of the new Libya; and that the House continues to offer its wholehearted and unconditional support to the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, who stand on guard for all of us, and continue to protect Libyan civilians from the risks still posed by the Gaddafi regime.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I begin by saying how proud I am to rise in support of this comprehensive motion laid out before the House.

I am especially proud of the tremendous role that our men and women in uniform have played over the past six months in protecting the Libyan people from the brutal dictatorship of Gadhafi and his henchmen.

I am truly pleased and honoured to speak to the proud contribution that Canada has made writ large in creating a new Libya, one free of tyranny and dictatorship, which after four decades will finally reflect the needs and aspirations of the Libyan people.

When the House first debated Canada's military mission in March, hon. members know I argued very clearly that we needed to act. At that time, Libyans were under attack by their government. They had joined a popular wave of uprisings across the Arab world to demand

an end to dictatorship. Moammar Gadhafi's regime met these peaceful protests with violent brutality.

The situation was dire and urgent. Misrata was besieged while Gaza was under threat of attack. Libyan civilians were touched by the violence of Gadhafi forces dropping bombs and shells everywhere indiscriminately.

Through the bloodshed and violence it was clear that Gadhafi had lost all legitimacy. As Canadians, we worked with our allies in the international community to bring forward a peaceful solution.

However, after all exhaustive diplomatic efforts had been made it was evident that action had to be taken to stop these massacres. The United Nations Security Council understood this reality and passed resolution 1973 on March 17. This resolution authorized all necessary action to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas in Libya.

I am proud that Canada took a leading role in enforcing the UN mandate. I wish to commend all hon. members for their role in supporting the Libyan people. In supporting Canada's participation in NATO's Operation Unified Protector, we sent a clear sign of Canada's determination to support the Libyan people.

Our international partners understand that Canada is a country that not only carries its weight but punches above it. Today is a new round.

[*Translation*]

Support for the motion before us today will enable us to extend the leadership that Canada has shown since the start of the conflict in Libya earlier this year.

Canada has made an important contribution to the major changes in Libya. We have shown our allies that we are a reliable partner. We have shown the people of Libya that they can always count on Canada to do the right thing.

Our work in Libya is not over. NATO has established three conditions for putting an end to its military operations in Libya: all attacks against civilians must have ended; there must be a verifiable withdrawal of the regime's military and paramilitary forces; and there must be full, safe access to humanitarian assistance for all the people of Libya who need it.

Government Orders

Although most Libyans have a kind of freedom they have not experienced in four decades, parts of Libya still remain in Gadhafi's iron grip. Gadhafi's ability to attack civilians has been reduced, but it has not been eliminated. The regime's remaining forces are fighting without much regard for the well-being of the people of Libya. There is better access to basic services, but some areas still have very acute needs.

[English]

In support of the UN Security Council resolution 2009 taken September 16, NATO on September 21 acknowledged that its mandate to protect civilians remains in force and extended its mission by up to three months.

As we know, Canada was in it from the very beginning and should remain there until the job is done. It has never shirked a responsibility and certainly cannot do so now. Through Canadian leadership and the military mission of the Canadian Forces, we have been at the leading edge of the Canadian effort in Libya. Working with our allies, we have been instrumental in preventing attacks against civilians. We have persevered. We have helped save lives of those who were at imminent risk while Gadhafi was at the helm. I am proud to say that the men and women of the Canadian Forces have been instrumental in the mission's success thus far.

Our air force has conducted approximately 9% of all NATO strike missions, provided vital aerial surveillance and carried out crucial refuelling missions. At sea, the HMCS *Charlottetown* and the HMCS *Vancouver* have enforced the UN mandate by carrying out important maritime patrols and enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

I also salute the leadership of Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard as commander of NATO's Operation Unified Protector. I call on all hon. members to join me in applauding his efforts for the achievements he has overseen not only on behalf of our country but on behalf of all NATO participants in this mission.

• (1110)

[Translation]

On June 14, the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke here and promised that Canada would implement an enhanced diplomatic engagement strategy for success in Libya.

I am pleased to announce that our government has kept its promise. On that day, Canada recognized the National Transitional Council as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people. Less than two weeks later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Benghazi and met the rebel leaders. He also delivered 355 trauma kits to help with pressing medical needs. He discussed Canada's deep concern about the use of rape as a weapon of war with the National Transitional Council and with civil society representatives.

The Libyans he met in Benghazi shared their horror at these heinous crimes and said that, because of cultural sensitivities, the full extent of the crimes is not really known. Victims are hesitant to receive treatment or support. Canada's determination to help them is clear.

[English]

It has become clear that the council is legitimate. It represents the Libyan people until there is a full democratic process in place. It has a genuine commitment to rebuilding Libya by establishing for its people a government that is based on the rule of law. That is expressed in its vision of a democratic Libya, its road map and the more recent announcement of a constitutional declaration.

These principles must now be put into action. The international community has a mandate to protect civilians in Libya and to support reforms. However, it is the responsibility of the Libyan people to take the reins and guide their country into the future.

That means rebuilding. Of course that means leveraging Libya's immense natural wealth. It means establishing a civil society and democratic institutions. The road ahead will not be easy. However, as with previous conflicts and its previous efforts and missions around the world, Canada will be there to assist.

During our debate here in June, members will recall it was unclear how events would unfold in Libya. The one-man rule had been the reality in that country for four decades. In fact, that was all that two generations of Libyans had ever known. How quickly that has changed.

On August 21 Tripoli fell, as some members of the opposition were referring to stalemates and musing about Canada pulling out. Gadhafi and those closest to him fled, while those who remained are still on the run.

Four days later on August 25, Canada accredited the new Libyan chargé d'affaires who was appointed by the NTC and is committed to addressing the NTC as Libya's legitimate government until elected representatives are in place.

On September 1, the Prime Minister and the foreign affairs minister attended the Paris conference on Libya. They announced the lifting of sanctions imposed by Canada since the UN Security Council has released more of the frozen Canadian-held funds.

Conditions in Tripoli are improving. Traffic jams are back, a sign that basic commodities like fuel are now available, and the people have the confidence to leave their homes. The flags of the new Libyan country are prominently displayed throughout the city. Children and adults alike are dressed in T-shirts and ball caps of red, black and green stripes. We now see a degree of civility returning, such as street cleaning and the neighbourhood distribution of water and food, when both were scarce. This obviously did not exist in the days running up to the fall of Gadhafi.

The infrastructure is still largely intact outside of specific areas of fierce fighting such as Misrata. In Tripoli, the precision of NATO's strikes over the past month is evident. Some government buildings were damaged but little else.

As well, Libya enjoys oil wealth which of course will be of great assistance in its rebuilding. While there has been some damage to oil facilities, repairs are already under way.

Despite these positive signs, there are still very real challenges on the horizon for Libya. Many of the demands for a better quality of life that preceded the conflict still remain. People want better schools, hospitals and job opportunities.

After four decades of stagnation, the Libyan people are hungry for change. The challenge for Libya's new rulers will be to deliver while also maintaining cohesion among its desperate elements that shared in ridding the country of the Gadhafi regime.

Security and stability require the control of many thousands of weapons now circulating in that country as well as the young men who carry them. It was Gadhafi's son Saif who promised to fight to the last man, woman and bullet.

Today we see that is indeed what Gadhafi loyalists intend to do. Together we have watched the brutal tenacity of Gadhafi and his followers in their attempts to remain in power, first in Tripoli and now from strongholds in Bani Walid and Sirte, leading to the further senseless loss of lives.

There are significant hurdles to overcome. Success is not an option. It is an imperative. Again, that is why Canada will be there.

Libyans are asking for our support to continue to protect civilians as well as to provide technical assistance to help them build a country that for the first time represents freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Our role is no less important now than it was in March, two months ago or two weeks ago. To end our multi-pronged mission now would jeopardize everything we have accomplished in Libya this year as well as abandon our allies in their continuing efforts.

• (1115)

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are at the United Nations together this week. They and other leaders from more than 80 countries met to address how to best assist Libya in implementing its plans for stabilizing and rebuilding the country. These include the work of a special support mission that will coordinate support among donors, restore public security and promote rule of law, undertake political dialogue leading to national reconciliation, extending the authority of state institutions, protecting human rights and support for transitional justice and, of course, aid in the economic recovery, among other efforts.

I am pleased to report that our government is leading a whole of government effort that will respond to a post-Gadhafi era with targeted assistance where Canada will add value. This will come in conjunction with other support, both domestic and international, and that is what is at stake here today. Canada stands ready to promote effective governance in institutions and expertise, a secure environment founded on the rule of law, economic development, prosperity and respect for human rights, including women's rights and religious freedoms. In addition to support for Libya, Canada is also focusing on returning full services to Canadians in Libya, including support for Canadian companies.

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Following an assessment mission done by the Departments of National Defence and Foreign Affairs, Canada has re-established its diplomatic presence in Libya. The embassy is currently operating out of a temporary location while repairs at the chancery are being completed. It will re-open at full operations as soon as the appropriate level of security is deemed to be in place.

It is important in our discussion today to remember that Libya is not a poor country. It has immense petroleum wealth but it has simply been squandered or seconded by a dictator for several generations. The scourge of war has, of course, taken its toll on the country as well. Libya will need to refurbish its oil infrastructure and its export capacity. It will need to make basic repairs to roads, dams, water wells, electrical and power generation, and a host of other areas of critical infrastructure. These things will happen not only with international support but they will happen at the initiative of the Libyan people.

• (1120)

[Translation]

When the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke here in June about the mission in Libya, he said, "Our strategy is clear."

And it has never been clearer. By applying steady and unrelenting military and diplomatic pressure on the Gadhafi regime, while also delivering humanitarian assistance, Canada, its NATO allies and other international partners have protected Libya's civilian population and created the conditions for a genuine political opening. Canadians know this. Canadians understand what needs to be done. Canadians know that our work is not finished.

[English]

As Minister of National Defence, I again reiterate how proud I am and how proud I believe Canadians are for our country's military contribution to this mission in Libya. We are fortunate to have such committed soldiers, sailors and air personnel who, three weeks ago, I had the privilege to meet with some of them when they returned to Halifax. I would describe this quite simply as a heroes' welcome on the wharf in Halifax. It was a moment that could be described as timeless as the men and women aboard the HMCS *Charlottetown* returned to the Port of Halifax and they were met by their families. They were met by other personnel, their colleagues, but they were met, interestingly, by a number of Libyan Canadians who were there to show their affection, support and appreciation for what those men and women aboard the *Charlottetown* had done for them. They were unreserved in their thanks to those men and women as they debarked from the ship and told them how proud they were as Canadians, but as Canadians of Libyan descent. They had been talking to their families who were able to assure them that Canada was behind the people of Libya in this mission.

Government Orders

I will share very briefly something else that happened, which is quite common when ships return to port. A young mother was there with her child who was born while the father was at sea. This is a timeless scene when ships return to port and a sign of what sacrifice men and women in uniform make when they are away on deployed operations, not only the risk they undertake, but the personal sacrifice of time away from home and those important moments that they give up in order to protect our country.

The sense of duty not only to Canada but to the Libyan people is evident throughout the rank and file of the Canadian Forces. We should be immensely proud of them and immensely proud of the contributions they make on our behalf. Our men and women in uniform are playing a key leadership role in the enforcement of the international community's will through their significant contribution to the NATO mission. They are positioning Canada as an effective, dependable ally and partner, a reputation that we have enjoyed since our inception. However, most important, they are standing up for the people of Libya who are demanding change and getting support in that change and, in so doing, they are setting the stage for a peaceful future for Libyans and a transition that will occur under their watch.

Just as it was right to do so in June, I believe it is right now that we extend the Canadian Forces' mission for up to three months. It is the right thing to do now as well. I urge all hon. members to support this motion before the House. I look forward to the debate that will take place here today. I look forward to the information, the questions and the facts that we will put before the House and the country by virtue of this debate. Again, I thank all members present for participating in this important discussion.

• (1125)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will have an opportunity to make a speech shortly but I want to ask the minister whether he agrees that the situation today is far different from what was facing the United Nations on March 17 in the House? It passed the first resolution when Colonel Gadhafi was the regime in power in Libya and was actively threatening to effectively massacre civilians. We now have the opposition, the National Transitional Council, having taken Libya's seat at the United Nations. The regime no longer exists. Therefore, Canada's role can be entirely different from what it was in March of this year.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague that the conditions have improved. However, the work that is yet to be done remains. We need to be clear. Civilians are still being attacked by the Libyan regime as recently as this weekend. There is still capacity in place that permits Gadhafi to control a certain element. There is a certain following in the country who have access to weapons that can be used against civilians.

It is for that reason that the new UN Security Council resolution is in place. It is consistent with the original goals of the UN Security Council, which is to protect civilians, to enable humanitarian aid and for all actions against civilians to cease and desist.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech and I thank him and his staff publicly for the extensive and candid briefings within the limitations of open source material. Both Ambassador McCardell and General Vance have been very fulsome in their briefings to us, both privately and publicly. I thank the minister for his contribution

in arranging those briefings and keeping us all in the loop, so to speak.

We want to not only thank the brave men and women of the armed forces, but also the brave men and women who are serving us in the diplomatic corps led, in this case, by Sandra McCardell, and those who are serving with the humanitarian relief as it gets into the country.

I have a question for the minister with respect to the larger issue, which is going forward. This is a critical time for Libya. It is a rough neighbourhood, shall we say. There are countries there that have no democratic traditions whatsoever. We have put a lot of effort into ensuring that the National Transition Council has an opportunity to set up a stable formal government, possibly even a democratic form of government. There are cultural sensitivities there.

I had the occasion to be in South Africa a couple of weeks ago. We certainly got an earful about neo-colonialism and triumphalism and, unfortunately, Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy were on the front page of South African newspapers.

I want to put to the hon. minister the core question of going forward. How do we ensure that the gains that have been secured by our people in the military, in the diplomatic corps and with the humanitarian relief are not squandered by inadvertent triumphalism, neo-colonialism and those sorts of things that can actually be counterproductive to what has, to date, been an absolutely first rate effort?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood. I would very much, first, associate myself with the comments that he made about the officials, not only in their efforts to keep all members and Canadians informed about Canada's role in Libya, but the role of the diplomatic corps, the ongoing efforts of people on the ground in re-establishing our mission there are absolutely a key piece to the whole of government effort.

His question is a quintessential one as to how we continue to enable the Libyan people and ensure that these fragile gains, I would describe them, that have been made already are not lost, and that we continue to support what has always been the Canadian way, which is not to delve, in any way, into colonialism or triumphalism but to empower the people of Libya in ways that he alluded to, such as supporting the organic growth of democratic institutions, which I think are driven very much by the will and desire of people in Libya to achieve that decision-making power for themselves; to help them develop institutions, which are very much lacking at this point; to allow an economy to re-emerge from that country, because we know they have people, they have bureaucracy and they have government elements that they need to support. Therefore, working in concert, being a rational and reasonable voice at the table, for which we are very much admired, both at the United Nations, through NATO and through other institutions, and NGOs, I suspect as well, will play an important role in what we want to see and what we desire for change and for solid, unslippable institutions and a democratic process inside Libya.

• (1130)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the incredible leadership that he shows to our Canadian Forces and, more than that, the compassion that he continually shows for the people who serve this great country of Canada.

In terms of the minister's presentation with regard to what would happen if we were to prematurely to pull back at this time and not take on the extension, he talked a fair bit about some of the outcomes. I wonder what the message might be, not only to the Libyan people, who we have been able to help rebuild and protect, but also to our NATO partners.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex knows through his active participation in both the military committees and on behalf of his constituents that Canada is a very respected and founding member at NATO. More than that, we have been a reliable partner throughout Canada's history. That has been the case in this instance. Canada was a go-to nation. We stepped into the breach. We provided both the military and the diplomatic leadership on all fronts. We were among the first countries to indicate that level of support for the Libyan people on this mission.

He is also right, as other members have alluded to, that there is much more work to do. Canada still has more of the load to shoulder, which we do so willingly with enthusiasm, with no expectation of anything in return except the success of the Libyan people and the peaceful, democratic emergence of a nation that has been held back for decades. That has always been the inspiration for our country. The desire of our people has been to share many of the things that we too often take for granted in Canada. We are a country that looks outward, that projects outward, that looks for areas in which we can provide assistance and improvement. That is what we are doing. That has always been our country's history. That is something of which Canadians can forever be proud.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of National Defence if he is at all troubled by the fact that the Libyan rebel commander has admitted previous ties to al-Qaeda. He has actually spoken

favourably of al-Qaeda members as being "good Muslims fighting against invaders". Is the minister concerned about what looms as a genocide of black immigrant workers within Libya?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, of course I am concerned about any and all of those indications of linkages outside the country to extremism and to continued stubborn efforts that are being made by those loyal to Gadhafi to continue the violence. In fact, just this weekend inside Libya, Gadhafi's daughter was broadcasting the following message, "Remain reassured, your great leader is doing well. He carries weapons and is fighting on the fronts". This is a clear indication there is still the capacity to do harm, the capacity to bring violence to the people of Libya in many parts of the country.

It reinforces and underscores the need for Canada to continue to play a leadership role, both on the military and diplomatic fronts, and to continue to try to root out all forms of violence, of intolerance, of assaults against human rights. This is why Canada is such an admired country in the world today.

• (1135)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an important debate for many reasons. It is the third debate on Canada's mission in Libya. We passed a resolution in this House on March 17, and a further one on June 14 extending that mission for three months. We now are faced with the government seeking to continue the military mission for a further three months.

The reason this debate is so important is that it is really about the future of Canada's role internationally, to what extent it will see itself as a military power primarily, or whether it will continue the well-respected role it was known for in providing a very different type of image and action on the world stage.

This is a brand-new approach to international action. The military intervention in Libya through resolution 1973 is in response to a very new doctrine, and some call it an emerging doctrine, of the responsibility to protect. It is a situation in which the normal rules of state sovereignty, alive since the 18th century, have been overridden by humanitarian goals, the obligation of other states to ensure that civilians are protected where a state is incapable, unwilling, or in this case, is a perpetrator of actions against its own civilians.

In doing so, it is extremely important that the international community get this right. As a party, we approached this very gingerly from the beginning. We supported resolution 1973, and still have no regrets about our support for Canada's involvement as of March 17 in engaging in support of resolution 1973.

It has not been without controversy. There have been criticisms along the way about the actions of NATO from time to time, but more so about the comments that have been made also from time to time by world leaders and by members of this House, including the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister, about what can only be called regime change as a goal of Canada's involvement in Libya.

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There may be nuances in explanation of that and I am sure the Minister of National Defence will have a chance to do that, but it has never been our intention or desire to support an intervention based on the notion of regime change, for a very simple reason. It has nothing to do with our shared abhorrence of Colonel Gadhafi and his methods and willingness to do terrible things to his own citizens, including murder and mayhem. What it has to do with is the question of the possibility and precedent for Canada or other nations being engaged in other people's civil wars.

We supported the resolution. It was extremely important that we did so. We supported the extension in June. At that time the regime of Colonel Gadhafi was still in power. The regime was continuing to carry out the activities that resolution 1973 was designed to counter.

Canada has played a significant role, as the minister pointed out. We too share in thanking the men and women of our military and our diplomatic corps for their contribution to the protection of Libyan civilians from the risks posed by the Gadhafi regime. They have done what we have asked them to do. They have done it with honour and they have done it well.

• (1140)

The question now is as to what the situation is we are dealing with today as compared to March 17 or June 14.

We had a briefing last Monday from an official from the Department of National Defence, Major-General Jonathan Vance. We had a briefing from our Canadian Ambassador to Libya, Her Excellency Sandra McCardell.

We very much appreciated the follow-through by the government on the resolution passed in the House, which was reiterated on June 14, that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence remain seized of Canada's activities under UNSC resolution 1973, and appreciates the government's full and continued co-operation on committee meetings and the sharing of information.

That was an amendment inserted into the resolution that was adopted by the House as requested by the New Democratic Party. It was done to ensure that the House play a role as a civilian parliamentary oversight of the actions of the Canadian military abroad. That is a trend that ought to be continued and encouraged at all times when Canada is engaged in military action abroad.

As others have noted, we did get full, frank, open briefings from our very professional diplomatic and military sources to keep us abreast of the state of play and the activities in Libya that required our knowledge and understanding in order for us to form our opinions.

We have obviously been following the news all along, but as a result of the briefing last week it is pretty clear that we are in an entirely different set of circumstances now than we were in March or even in June.

Ten days ago the National Transitional Council took Libya's seat in the United Nations. It was recognized as the official representative of the people of Libya in the United Nations, representing the state.

The former Gadhafi regime is in what Major-General Vance has called an eroding defensive position. It is eroding daily. It is not done. There are still two cities, Sirte and Bani Walid, where the forces of Colonel Gadhafi are holding out. They seem to have the ability to prevent incursions very easily by the National Transitional Council forces, mostly through the use of snipers.

As I said, and as Major-General Vance said, it is an eroding defensive position. The former Gadhafi regime is not in any state to carry out the kind of activities that caused resolution 1973 to be adopted by the United Nations back in March and our resolution here in the House following on with Canada's support.

Back in February, Colonel Gadhafi and his son, Saif, were talking about their views and promised that they would fight to the last man, woman and bullet, that they would not lose Libya.

Her Excellency Sandra McCardell, in a briefing to the foreign affairs committee in July, referred to the initial promise in mid-March by Gadhafi when they were on the outskirts of Benghazi promising to purify Libya inch by inch, house by house, person by person, until the country was clean of the dirt and impurities, and this from a man who had already described his people as rats and dogs. That was what we were dealing with back in March and it is what we have been dealing with for the past six months.

• (1145)

Canada has played a very significant role in this. In fact, among the nations we have been the largest contributor after the United States, Great Britain and France. In our view, we have done more than our share on the military side. The question now is what role Canada should play in the future of Libya.

We are in what is the end game of a civil war, but it is a civil war within Libya. The forces of the National Transitional Council are, as described by General Vance, weeks, not months or years, and it may only be days away, from an end to the civil war. Although it may be questioned as to what role NATO can play now in terms of the end game when we look at an eroding defensive position by the Gadhafi forces, it is clear that its role is much less and, in fact, lessening by the day, when it is understood that we are dealing with the end game of a civil war.

We are not there to take sides in a civil war. We have grave concerns that this be done right and that in the future the responsibility to protect ought not to be used as a cover for regime change or other interventions. This is a very careful issue that I am sure will be debated by international legal experts for some time to come. However, I do not want to get into that too much as a justification for our position.

Our position is that Canada has done more than its share militarily and should now refocus its efforts on the other aspects of rebuilding of Libya. We were very interested and concerned that, along with the United Nations resolution 1973, there be a Libyan-led solution to the political crisis as well to form a new government. Some doubts have been expressed, as we have heard here today, about what the National Transitional Council is, who is engaged and how well it will be able to form good governance in Libya.

A new resolution, resolution 2009, of the United Nations was passed only on September 16. It recognizes that it is taking note of the developments in Libya, welcoming the improved situation and looking forward to stability in Libya. It talks about the establishment of an inclusive representative transitional government and emphasizes the need for a transitional period to be underpinned by a commitment to democracy, good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights.

It goes on and on to talk about the necessity for change in Libya that supports a call for Libyans of all beliefs and background to refrain from reprisals, which is extremely important. It also notes that the Libyan Transitional National Council is concerned about this and that it calls for an avoidance of acts of reprisals, including against migrant workers. Apparently, some migrant workers are being targeted because they appear to be from southern Africa and are being attacked because they are suspected mercenaries.

The United Nations Security Council has taken strong measures to set up the new mission in Libya, under the leadership of a special representative, for a three-month period to assist in restoring public security, order, promoting the rule of law and a whole series of issues under the UN mandate, as spelled out in article 12 of resolution 2009.

• (1150)

We think this is where Canada ought to focus its efforts. As I said earlier, Canada has made a significant contribution to the mission in Libya, a contribution which far exceeds our place in the world in terms of our size, our military, our population and our financial wherewithal, frankly. We have made more than a significant contribution.

As other nations have done, such as Norway, we are in a position to change our focus and our role. We, as New Democrats, do not support a continued military role in Libya. Rather we believe we should refocus our efforts to that of assisting in the efforts to rebuild Libya and support the use of all the Canadian efforts that will help us do that.

I have a motion, which I will move shortly, incorporating that, but the thrust of the motion is to refocus our efforts in the areas of assisting in the development of governance, in the development and the rule of law and in humanitarian aid and spending some of resources on that rather than on continuing in the military role.

We appreciate and thank our soldiers and our diplomats for their efforts to date. We think the Government of Canada should be using its good offices, its talented people, our NGOs and others who have a great interest in supporting this effort and in participating in the assistance in rebuilding Libya and in a larger civilian commitment to the post-conflict transition that is to take place in Libya, hopefully with greater assistance from our country than we have been able to provide to date. With the new government in Libya and improved access to Libya, we now think it is time for us to engage in the post-conflict phase.

Therefore, I wish to move the following:

That the motion be amended by:

- (a) substituting the words "an extension of up to three months of the involvement of the Canadian Armed Forces operating with NATO in accordance with the legal

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mandate from the UNSC Resolution 1973; that the House continues to support" with the words "focusing our efforts on";

- (b) substituting the words "continue to protect Libyan civilians from the risks still posed by the Gaddafi regime" with the words "thank them for their contribution to the protection of Libyan civilians from the risks posed by the Gaddafi regime".

The motion would now read:

That, in standing in solidarity with those seeking freedom in Libya, the House adopted government motions on March 21 and June 14, 2011 authorizing all necessary measures, including the use of Canadian Armed Forces and military assets in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973; that given the current military situation and the success of National Transitional Council (NTC) and anti-Gaddafi forces to date, the House supports focusing our efforts on Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law; that the House deplores the violence committed by the previous regime against the Libyan people, including the alleged use of rape as a weapon of war; that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence shall remain seized of Canada's activities under UNSC Resolution 1973 and in the rebuilding of the new Libya; and that the House continues to offer its wholehearted and unconditional support to the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, who stand on guard for all of us, and thank them for their contribution to the protection of Libyan civilians from the risks posed by the Gaddafi regime.

• (1155)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I have been advised that the amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for St. John's East, in calling for an end to the mission of Canada's armed forces, has referred a post-conflict phase, a phase during which the conflict would be over. At the same time, he has referred to the very serious fighting still under way in Bani Walid and in Sirte and the serious dangers posed to the civilian population there, where Gadhafi and his forces continue to enunciate the most violent objectives against their own population. We have been told by Ambassador McCardell that up to 15% of the population of Libya may reside in that area.

Could the hon. member inform the House what the consequences would be if Canada, our NATO allies and our non-NATO allies followed his advice at this point? What would the consequences be for the civilians of Bani Walid, Sirte and the area in south central Libya that are still under imminent threat?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, events are moving very fast in Libya. As the parliamentary secretary knows, the most recent reports refer to 400 or 500 cars per day of civilians fleeing that area. I have seen pictures on BBC News of shelling of Sirte by the forces of the NTC. I am not sure how accurate those are. No doubt civilians are going to flee the areas. There is no question that civilians are in danger as long as the civil war continues. The danger, however, is rather limited to the activity that can be perpetrated if the Gadhafi forces are not in a position to attack anyone. We are not playing a role in the civil war.

I am not talking so much about the fact that that resolution 1973 continues. I am talking about Canada's involvement and what Canada should be doing, whether we should be continuing our efforts or refocusing them on what we think Canada is good at doing.

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I am not saying we are not good at doing military work. We have done more than our share, more than every country in the world with the exception of the once superpowers of France, United States and Great Britain. The question is what is Canada's role? Canada has a lot more to offer than what it has done so far and we think the focus should change to that.

• (1200)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member's speech was correct in that he attempted to frame the debate in terms of the overall concept of the responsibility to protect. I think he was absolutely accurate about that and correct to warn us about the mission creep into regime change and various other things.

However, I think the hon. member is not correct when he does not take the advice of what I thought were fairly candid and open conversations with our officials, particularly General Vance and Ambassador McCardell.

I wonder whether the hon. member is concerned that if force is prematurely withdrawn, it will be what he fears the most, which is a supervision of a low- or possibly higher-grade civil war among the various factions, and that if we do support this motion and there is force still to be played out that, there may actually be a reduction in the violence and a real possibility that institutional and governmental structures might be instituted.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, what we heard from our officials and the general was that what was left of Gadhafi's forces was an eroding defensive position and that there was still some potential.

I think the question is really whether it is the role of Canada to participate in the civil war to the extent of ensuring that one side wins. That is really the danger that we are saying exists.

If Colonel Gadhafi's forces are no longer in a position to act in an aggressive manner and to carry out whatever threats they may have made in the past, the military threats, as General Vance said, are small. There are some, but they are small. As to the fact that there is a potential, anyone with a gun has the potential to do harm, but that is not what we are dealing with here. We are dealing with the question of what Canada should do now, over the next three months. Should it carry on this mission as a military one or should it focus its attention on what we have suggested here?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for my hon. colleague is that the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs have been seized with the situation on Libya as per the motion that was passed in this House on June 14.

As a member of the defence committee, I ask my colleague this question: at the briefings he has had, what has he learned or heard from military and diplomatic officials about the change in the capacity of Gadhafi's forces since June?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate the praise that I extended to the officials for their full briefings. We have had frank discussions about what exactly their role is.

Were we engaged, for example, in providing close air cover to the anti-Gadhafi forces in Libya? That was an important question because of the accusation being made that NATO was simply air

power for the Gadhafi forces. It was very important for General Vance to make it clear that what Canada and the other nations in NATO were doing was not that, but that our actions were in response to perceived and seen attacks against civilians, such as the use of ammunition dumps, for example, which have been used for attacks against civilians, and in response to the attacks on control and command centres. We were assured continually that the job was based on a legal analysis of what was appropriate and proper based on legitimate targets.

However, we also did learn that there had been significant changes. I have heard the figure that as of last Monday Gadhafi was left with a couple of hundred thousand people in the areas that are potentially under control and that he is in an eroding defensive position that is likely to be a tactical loss within a couple of weeks.

• (1205)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's speech.

I recall that the NDP made similar comments in early August when the foreign affairs committee and the defence committee met to examine these issues. At that time the NDP was pretty clear that in their opinion there was a military stalemate in Libya, that there was going to be no military solution in Libya, and that it was pretty much time for NATO troops, including the Canadian Forces, to withdraw from that conflict and to withdraw from protecting civilians.

I am confused, given that two weeks after those briefings, in fact Tripoli did fall. I am confused that since the NDP members had come to the conclusion at that time that there was going to be no military solution, how can they now be clear now, as the hon. member says, that Libya is in the end game and that the Gadhafi forces do not have the wherewithal to continue their violent actions against the civilian people in Libya?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, we certainly did not say that there was no military solution in Libya. It is a civil war, and obviously that is a military engagement. What we said was that the NDP believed that the mission could probably end at the end of September unless there was some significant change. The change we have seen, in fact within 10 days of that committee meeting on August 12, is that Tripoli fell, and we now no longer have a Gadhafi regime at all.

Major-General Vance said at that time that the situation was dynamic. He has since said that there is no strategic advantage to Colonel Gadhafi, that this is a tactical effort and that it is a matter of weeks, not months, before the Gadhafi forces are overrun, so we are in a situation very different from what it was earlier. It would take something really dramatic to have us continue to support another three-month extension at this time, based on our understanding that the crisis that brought us to this, starting in March, was that we were dealing with an emergency situation for a period of up to six months and that after that it would be something entirely different.

The something entirely different right now is the post-conflict activity that we think Canada should be focused on and engaged in.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to speak to all of the resolutions in the House on Libya and I am glad to be able to participate in the debate today.

I will be indicating to the House our support for Canada's staying the course with the United Nations, to our staying the course with our NATO allies, and to our staying the course with our friends in the Libya community both in Canada and in Libya. I will be asserting very strongly the need for Canada to in fact expand its engagement with civil society in Libya and with the broader issues of governance and reform, not only in Libya but in North Africa.

[Translation]

We do not agree with our NDP colleagues' position that it is time to withdraw our support for the UN- and NATO-led efforts and stop protecting civilians in Libya through international action.

I find the NDP position described by the hon. member for St. John's East completely inconsistent. First of all, one cannot agree with the NATO and United Nations position but also say that once the Gadhafi regime is defeated and the people are no longer being oppressed, that is when Canada should withdraw. It makes no sense.

I understand where my NDP colleagues' reasoning comes from, but their position is completely inconsistent. It is as though we had to choose between two UN resolutions—resolution 1973 and resolution 2009—and the NDP has chosen the one that deals with the civilian situation in Libya and is ignoring the resolution that deals with the military situation. It makes no sense.

• (1210)

[English]

We have to be consistent. I must say I am very disappointed in the comments from my colleague from Newfoundland. He says we do not want to take sides in a civil war. The implication is that he is indifferent as to whether the regime of Colonel Gadhafi stays or not. I cannot believe that is the position of the official opposition of Canada.

We on this side are not indifferent with respect to what happens in Libya. We want there to be the emergence of a civil society and of a civil government that represents the broad interests of the people of Libya. That is the position of the Liberal Party of Canada, and that should be the position of the House of Commons as well.

There is the notion that somehow it is too delicate to say, and I heard the member from Newfoundland say it, "We don't want to take sides". Why did the United Nations pass resolution 1973? It passed resolution 1973 because there was a government in Libya that was about to attack its own citizens and its own people. That is why it went in.

Now the question becomes, what has changed? Well, things have moved beyond where they were. It is true that the regime is apparently on its last legs. We know that its members are hiding in two cities.

However, I have to say I am not going to substitute my judgment for that of the United Nations or that of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who has asked Canada to continue in this role. I am not going to substitute my judgment for those or for those our allies

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our in NATO, who say it is important for us to continue with this mission under the umbrella of the United Nations. I am not about to substitute my mission and say that I have been reading the newspapers over the last couple of days and that I know better what is going on in Libya and that I know the right moment for Canada to withdraw. It is a fundamentally absurd proposition.

Because of the internal workings of the New Democratic Party, its members say that it has to be the party of peace. We are all the party of peace, but being a party of peace does not mean that we have to be a party of appeasement or a party of indifference. We in the Liberal Party are not a party of indifference and we are certainly not a party of appeasement.

The lesson of collective security, which we learned as a planet throughout the middle of the 20th century, has now been furthered by our obligation to be concerned about what happens inside a state.

The great revolution in international law that my colleague, the member for Mount Royal, has had so much to do with and has had so much to say about is the revolution that says what happens inside states is every bit as important to us and our obligation as citizens as what happens between states. That is the simple message of the responsibility to protect.

I know that the government opposite is reluctant to talk about the responsibility to protect and that we want to put this language into the resolution, but it is very important for the House to understand that the reason the United Nations took the unusual step of asking for a military intervention in Libya was precisely to protect the civilian population and that there was no other way in which that could be done.

Gadhafi had threatened very clearly that he was going to go house by house to cleanse his country of dirt, which is language reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Reducing people to microbes very quickly establishes what the real objective is, and they are now discovering mass graves in which hundreds and hundreds of people are buried.

I cannot believe my ears when I hear the New Democratic Party spokesman say we cannot take sides in this dispute in Libya. It is a truly preposterous statement. Those NDP members do not have the courage of their humanitarianism to understand what it takes to ensure that the humanitarian goals are accomplished.

The New Democratic Party says we have to change course.

No, we do not have to change course. We have to add to the course. We have to continue to do what we are doing with respect to our obligations under our treaty obligations with NATO and with respect to the work we have undertaken with the United Nations.

At the same time, it is important for us to ask whether the civilian work has to be added to. Of course, it does. Does the work that we are doing on the humanitarian side have to be added to? Of course it does. Does there need to be a more robust strategy with respect to civil governance in Libya? Of course there does. Does there need to be a democratic strategy with respect to what is taking place in North Africa? Of course there does.

Do we think, inside the Liberal Party, that the Conservatives have done enough in that area? Not at all.

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• (1215)

[Translation]

Lastly, there is the risk that all the non-governmental organizations that have been doing crucial work in this area for decades will collapse because of a lack of funding from the Conservative government.

There is no consistent program, either within CIDA or at the heart of government, to help ensure good governance when it comes to foreign affairs. That is a real problem. We recognize that and want to point it out. There are all kinds of organizations across the country that have worked hard to support good governance in this transition to democracy, which we want to see around the globe. However, while the Conservative government likes to talk about human rights, it does not seem to want to move things forward.

[English]

As Liberals, we find ourselves in the situation where we do not see a government which is willing to live up to its words about good governance and its words about human rights, and it is not following that strategy effectively in terms of giving the assistance to the non-governmental organizations which have been the lifeblood of this movement in Canada over the last 30 years.

I can give any minister first-hand knowledge to say that they are not living up here and not living up there. The Europeans have now developed a robust program with respect to assisting democracies. The Americans have a robust program with respect to supporting democracy, good governance and a new way of life.

However, the government of Canada is retreating from those policies. It is moving away from those policies and not sustaining those organizations and institutions. It is talking the game, but it is not playing the game. It seems to me that it is time as Canadians we learn to do something very simple: walk and chew gum at the same time.

We believe very strongly that it is important for Canada to have a coherent and credible policy. What is being proposed by the official opposition has no particular credibility. To suggest that we were there at the beginning but we are going to leave before it is over is just ridiculous. We did not pull back from other situations until the victory was assured. That, it seems to me, is critical. We go in with the United Nations and NATO, and that is when we come out. That is how we do things. That is what builds the credibility of this country.

On the other side, what builds the credibility of this country is for our foreign policy to reflect more than just a military policy. Our foreign policy cannot just be a question of which military interventions we want to support and that be the end of the subject. It has to be engaged much more profoundly on a whole set of levels with Libyan society, with the changes that are underway in north Africa, with the changes that are underway around the world.

We are not going to be able to sustain that credibility unless we are in a very clear position to do both things. We do not have to choose between resolution 1973 and resolution 2009 of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We can actually do both. We can say that we are there to see this conflict through and the emergence

of a government that speaks for the people of Libya. We are also there to assist in the achievement of better governance in the country itself.

There are serious issues. My colleagues have mentioned that there are serious issues: what kind of a transition it would be; what assurances we would have that there would be no reprisals; the situation affecting migrant workers; as well as the situation of human rights, the promotion of human rights and the equality between women and men, which is such a critical feature of our own lives here in Canada.

We cannot walk away from these issues. We cannot say that we are interested in doing business in Libya, but we are not interested in the human rights situation or democracy in Libya. We have to develop a foreign policy that is robust enough and intelligent enough to do both things in harmony. My colleague, the parliamentary secretary, says that we do.

I can tell my good friend that it just is not the case that Canada has maintained its credibility with respect to all the other things that go into making good governance. CIDA has downgraded it and is not doing it the way it used to do it before. CIDA is not involved in the governance field the way it used to be before and it is not supporting these changes. The Department of Justice is not supporting these changes. The budget for it in the Department of Foreign Affairs is under constant threat and the member should know that. He should understand the budgets for which he holds some responsibility. That is something that has to continue to be emphasized. We say very clearly that the government is not broadening the base of the mission sufficiently in Libya.

We want that mission to be broadened in its civilian, humanitarian, legal, and human rights orientation. We know that needs to happen and we want it to happen. We would not use the excuse of having a different perspective with respect to how it needs to be broadened, or invent some reason now as to why, a few weeks away from the culmination, we hope, that Canada would say it is sorry but it does not really want to be engaged, or in the words of the member from Newfoundland, "We've done more than our share".

• (1220)

Is this really the vision of Canada the government is proposing? This is not a little matter of accounting: we put in a few more bucks than somebody else. It is this small mindedness, frankly, of what we are seeing here that takes away from what needs to be a big, generous and, may I say it, Liberal vision of a foreign policy for this country.

Yes, it needs to be robust enough that we can deal with crises and have the courage of our humanitarian principles to say we will intervene, even militarily, if that is what it takes to stop tyranny from having its impact on its own citizens. We are not afraid to say that.

We also know that military solutions alone are not enough, that what comes after the change of government is every bit as important, and that requires an equally robust commitment to aid, assistance, advice, and presence. But I can tell members opposite, the Europeans are doing it, the Americans are doing it, and Canada used to do it under a Liberal government. It is time that it did it for the future of Canada and indeed, for the future of the region.

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Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, normally I would not have intervened because I was really enjoying the speech by the leader of the Liberal Party when he rightly pointed out the fallacy of the NDP position on this motion, which I think he very rightly put forward, and I probably agree with that.

However, I challenge him when he says that there is no robust foreign policy from the government. That is not true. The government has been engaged very strongly on the foreign affairs issue.

It was this government that went to Libya and look at the result today. We are almost at the stage of victory.

This government was in Haiti. This government was where it was needed to be and it has a very strong foreign policy on the international stage.

This week the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be at the United Nations, and so will I, but let me remind the leader of the Liberal Party about the four fundamental principles of this government's foreign policy and he can tell me what is wrong with them: freedom, promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. That is what this government's foreign policy is about.

● (1225)

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, those are good words, but the problem is that the Conservatives have starved every other institution in the country that is interested in sustaining those very objectives. It has cut them off.

I can see the member for Ajax—Pickering shaking his head all the way over here. He shakes his head, but that is the reality. The underlying reality is that the organizations that are sustaining that and doing it are being underfunded. The fact is that CIDA, which used to have a mandate to do those things, no longer has a mandate to do those things.

The fact of the matter is that budgets in Foreign Affairs to do those things simply are not there or are being taken away.

If the member opposite is really interested in these objectives, he has to understand that we do not have the robust institutions that are required to carry out the policies which are not just the policies of the Conservative government but the policies of the people of Canada.

It is the people of Canada who support human rights. It is the people of Canada who support good governance. What we do not have is a government that is committed to actually doing it on the ground.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do want to respond to the speech by the member from Ontario.

The member from Ontario made a big speech attacking the New Democratic Party. The member claims a reputation for understanding international affairs and the nuances of such, and he knows the difference between intervening in a civil war and acting in response to the responsibility to protect. So, to be petty and political in a situation like this and attack another party, not for the agenda but for the sake of partisan politics is unworthy of him as a member from Ontario.

He was the one who, by the way, wanted to intervene in Libya before the United Nations was even involved. Is he signing on to the militarist agenda of the Prime Minister? Is that what we can continue to expect from him as leader of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I hear what the member for St. John's East is saying. What I am saying is that the member should go back and look at the text of what he said. He said that Canada cannot take sides in a civil war. I said that the implication of that is that he is indifferent as to whether Gadhafi wins or somebody else wins.

I said very clearly that I am not prepared to say that we are indifferent to that result. Was I in favour of a UN intervention prior to what the government was prepared to do? Yes, I was and so was the Liberal Party. It is all about whether we have the courage of our humanitarian principles.

Should we have intervened in Sri Lanka? I know the member for Scarborough—Rouge River was sitting next to the member for St. John's East. Should Canada and the world have intervened in Sri Lanka? I was in the House at the time saying yes, that the world should have intervened in Sri Lanka. How else were we going to stop tens of thousands of civilians from being killed by their own government? How else could we have stopped that if we were not prepared to intervene?

A party needs to have the courage of its humanitarianism. I do not see that present in the position enunciated by the member for St. John's East.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we call that a lesson in politics. I congratulate my leader. I would like to ask him the following question.

Yes, we must be in Libya, we must intervene, but the member said something very important at the beginning: Canada must be more engaged in North Africa. The political reality of the Arab spring is that Canada will be asked to play a leading role.

Can the member explain his vision of Canada's involvement? We cannot just pick and choose; this is not just about Libya. The entire Arab world is in flux. What should our responsibility be in this situation?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question from my colleague from Bourassa. He is quite right.

It is not enough to have policies for specific countries. We must have a position that is coherent and consistent with our interests as Canadians. For example, when we look at the situation in North Africa, Canada is not involved in all the debates taking place, whether in Tunisia, Egypt or all of these countries, with respect to questions about democracy and what will be done to ensure that after the spring, we see a summer and not a winter. Canada can play a role. I can assure members that Europe, France and other countries are playing a role. Canada, which is not an imperialist country, has a certain degree of credibility. We have a large diaspora from the Maghreb. This is the right time for Canada to play a much more positive role than we have played to date. It is very important to address this matter in this way.

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● (1230)

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I observed that my colleague had great difficulty understanding where the NDP stood from the beginning. I want to ask the member a question, as my colleague for St. John's East did.

When we came out in support of the Libyan people, before other parties, including the government, it was for a no-fly provision through the UN. A couple of days after, the member, as the foreign affairs critic, and his party said that we needed to have NATO intervene.

I want to ask a very straightforward question. Was it and is it the position of the Liberal Party that, in these affairs, it is better to go through NATO first or should we have, as this party believes, the approval of the United Nations Security Council first?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, in many circumstances in the world today, it is a false choice. The fact is that the intervention in Libya is one that has been carried out under the jurisdiction of the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has urged NATO to continue with its work with respect to the implementation of the no-fly zone, the implementation of Resolution 1973. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is not telling Canada that it is time to back off, go away, disappear, that it is time to say goodbye, that we should do our humanitarian work but choose to do the humanitarian work and have nothing to say on the defence side.

What we are saying is quite consistent. There needs to be a willingness on the part of the world today, not just Canada but of the world institutions, to put some teeth into its commitment to humanitarianism. If the responsibility to protect is going to mean something, the world will need to respond.

We were all surprised, frankly. I certainly was surprised. I do not know about the hon. member but I will confess to my surprise at the fact that the Security Council was able to find the courage to follow through and intervene in the way that it did. If that had not happened, what should Canada have done? That is an open question. If every intervention must depend on the entire United Nations apparatus and on Security Council agreeing, we hope that will always happen. Whatever we do needs to be done according to the principles of international law. Whatever we do needs to be justifiable.

This caucus, this party, this previous Liberal government was opposed to the intervention in Iraq because it did not have the support of the United Nations and it did not have the support of coherent principles of international law.

Our principles and our views are very clear. However, we need to understand that to intervene requires justification in international law. It also requires a willingness to see things through and not to simply walk away when it becomes politically convenient to do so. That is a very important principle for us as well.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion, which, I will like to tell my friend from the NDP, is in two portions. One is the extension of the NATO operation and the other is to go ahead in a robust, democratic way to rebuild the institutions of that country, which has been agreed to by all parties.

However, there is no need for me to talk about the NDP position because the Liberal leader did an excellent job of indicating why the NDP's position is totally out of line with the events going on.

The leader of the Liberal Party talked about our foreign policy. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I can say, in no uncertain terms, that this government plays a very active role on foreign affairs issues around the world. We have four basic pillars of foreign affairs: freedom, human rights, rule of law and promotion of democracy, which is why Canada is fighting and is leading the revolution in condemning Iran on its human rights record. Once again, Canada's government has shown it stands up for the promotion of human rights.

I will now address the extension of the Libyan mission and why it is necessary for us to support it. Very few people in this chamber have visited Libya. I have had the opportunity to visit Libya where I had the opportunity to go to Sirte as well, as part of the African Union summit held there. When I landed in Libya, my impression was a totally different experience. I could see the lack of democracy and the lack of engagement of civil society. I could see that people were subdued, something similar to a police state. The arrangements that were made by the Libyan authorities, by someone completely in total control and the people not having the ability to talk. Henceforth, it should not come as a surprise at all that the people of Libya came together in the Arab revolution in the spring. It was necessary and it happened. Those of us who visited Libya could see that and we easily knew that this was coming.

What stunned the whole world were the actions of Colonel Gadhafi to democratic reforms. It is quite interesting that when he was at the African Union summit he called himself the "king of the kings" and he wanted to promote himself at the leader of the united states of Africa. I am really glad that the other African nations saw that and put a stop to his nonsense. If he could not do anything with his own country, which is rich in oil resources, then one could say that it was time for him to go. It was great that the people of Libya stood up for change.

I am also very pleased that Canada stood behind them as part of its human rights act and part of its promotion of democracy as we supported the Arab spring that was talking place both in Tunisia and Egypt. Canada took decisive steps when the dictators tried to stop expressions of freedom in those countries. Canada and this Prime Minister took very strong steps imposing sanctions and freezing assets of dictators' families. As a matter of fact, there was a debate in the House to change that law because there was no UN sanction. This government introduced a law in Canada where we can actually freeze assets when the assets are stolen from the people of the country. That was very strong action taken by this government.

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● (1235)

To go back to the issue, this government has said that we will work under the multilateral organization. Henceforth, when the UN Security Council heard in horror what Colonel Gadhafi was going to do, it agreed that there was a need to protect the civilians. People need to know that the security council is a very strong member of the African Union. The task was given to NATO. There is an obligation for Canada, as a NATO member, that when NATO is involved, we become involved. We cannot sit on the side and put forward caveats and say that we are a member of NATO, but we will not do this or that. That has been very evident in Afghanistan.

The parliamentary secretary, with our ambassador in Afghanistan, was a witness to the caveats that were there by other NATO members. At the same time, Canada stood immediately when NATO called for action over there, of the no-fly zone. It just confuses me that the NDP members said that there should be a no-fly zone. How should there be a no-fly zone? By whom? By just imposing that? Let us not talk about the NDP position. It confuses everyone.

We rose to the occasion. Our soldiers and our airmen went to fight for democracy, for our core Canadian values, to protect the civilians. They have done a marvellous job and NATO forces are led by a Canadian, as was said by the prime minister of Britain when he addressed the House.

After having all of those actions, and as has been rightly pointed out, we have gone all the way and the NTC has now taken quite a deep root there. The foreign affairs minister went to Libya and met with the NTC to see what its plan was. The Prime Minister has just returned back from a high-level meeting in New York with other leaders, chaired by the Secretary General Ban ki-Moon. The reconstruction will be done under the UN mandate. The whole development process will be all done through reconstruction building of the democratic institutions. It will all be done under the UN mandate and Canada will play a very strong role.

This weekend I was at the UN General Assembly at a meeting with my counterparts, this time from the African nations. It was very interesting that there was a change in the attitude of all the African leaders. They all now agree that it is time to move on. The NTC is in power. They have all recognized the NTC as a legitimate organizer and government of Libya. The NTC has now taken its seat at the United Nations. It is very important to see the whole world recognizing the NTC. This indicates a success of this mission.

However, we keep hearing reports that Gadhafi's forces are still fighting and still threatening. Therefore, it would be absolutely foolish to walk away and say that we went there to protect them but, as the NDP wants, we will leave them half way through, without giving them protection, so they are on their own. Even the defence critic of the NDP stated he saw on the BBC that the fighting was still going on, Gadhafi is not captured and his children are still calling for the fighting to continue. In recognition of this factor, NATO came out last week and said that the Libya mission would be extended for three months. Henceforth, we are back in Parliament telling that part of it. The world community is now saying that it is time to finish this job.

● (1240)

Colonel Gadhafi, or let us say bluntly, dictator Gadhafi, used to buy all his votes with his own money. He was not a democrat. We saw it in countries next door to Libya, whatever he was promoting, there was bribery. He was giving money to other countries and bought a membership to the African Union. That is fine. That is how he got his support. However, today, having come back from the UN, all of those countries have recognized the fact that the NTC is now in charge. The people of Libya have spoken and they have spoken very strongly.

It was a job for Canada and Canadians to go there and do it, and Canada did it remarkably well. Our soldiers stand out there.

I call upon the NDP to revisit its position and ask for an extension of three months. Hopefully, within a very short period of time, Colonel Gadhafi will be found, will be charged by NTC, brought to justice and he and his children will have to pay for their crimes. As soon as Colonel Gadhafi is found and he cannot tell his soldiers to fight, they will all disappear and peace will return to those cities he is still controlling. Then NATO's mission is done. Then the other mission comes in, which we talk about in the motion, of building the democratic institutions for that country.

When I was in Libya, nothing existed there. It is like starting from scratch. I also visited South Sudan. At the general assembly there were two new members. One was the new nation of South Sudan, which proudly took its seat at the UN general assembly. The other was the NTC, which took over Libya's seat as the legitimate government of the people of Libya. These were two monumental effects.

The world is now on the brink of sending a strong message. We see the Arab revolution and what is going on in Yemen. It is a cause of serious concern. We see what is happening in Tunisia, another cause of serious concern. We are not saying that there should be military intervention, or whatever. We have put very strong sanctions against Syria. However, when the dictators of these regimes see that the world is willing to act if they threaten their people, as we have done in Libya, then a very strong message goes out to them. The right of the people to speak is paramount, the promotion of democracy is paramount.

That is the issue that has come out from Libya. That is what the NDP should understand. The point still remains that the military mission is not complete.

When the defence critic said that attitude of the Prime Minister was militaristic, that is utter nonsense. We went there under the NATO call. We do not have any desire for military advances anywhere else, neither will we go anywhere else. That is an absolutely misleading statement made by the NDP. It cannot defend its position when it finds it is totally out of step with the values of the world.

I want to say in strong terms that around the international stage Libya is seen now as one of the key examples where the world spoke when a dictator was willing to slaughter his own people. We are getting, unfortunately, reports that thus is still happening.

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The NDP keeps talking about regime change. What does it want to do, leave that dictator there to throttle his people? What about the humanitarian factor? Who would we talk to, that dictator who is not willing to listen? It is only in the minds of NDP members to think that they do not need this thing and they can talk to a dictator who does not want to talk to them.

Anyway, it is good news that the government has taken a very strong stand with these four pillars. We have stood up on the international stage. Even the NDP has to admit that it was a great thing we did, that the military acted very responsibly.

It is very important. Our military stands for Canadian values. We promote our Canadian values. In the case of Libya, it was a very clear fact that not only were we protecting the civilians under the UN charter, but we were upholding our Canadian values with our military support.

• (1245)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to refute a number of attacks that the hon. parliamentary secretary has made on our party and me, but we did not go to Libya at the request of NATO or as part of NATO. We went there on our own in response to resolution 1973. NATO came afterwards to coordinate the command because it was the one capable of doing it. The Americans were coordinating it first, but they did not want to do that.

The government gave lip service to the Arab Spring, for example, failing to really support the efforts in Egypt or Tunisia. It then failed to provide any financial support to the new regimes, saying that we were already giving to some international fund.

One of our worries is that the same thing is happening in Libya and that the government is prepared to spend money on the military mission and will continue to do so into the future, instead of taking the position now that the job is mostly done, or almost done, as far as any military involvement and that Canada does not need to be there.

However, Canada could be putting more resources and money into the post-conflict issues, which we talked about and which our amendment seeks to have Canada do.

Why will the government not do that? It did not do it in Egypt. It did not do it in Tunisia. It seems to me that the government is not going to do in Libya, as it is only interested in continuing the military aspect.

• (1250)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, that is not correct. As soon as the Arab Spring started in Tunisia, the government acted very strongly, freezing assets and with sanctions and in supporting the democracy movement over there. When it happened in Egypt, we were there.

However, Canada does not act unilaterally. Canada acts with its allies and partners to ensure there is an effective use of taxpayer money.

Henceforth, in all the areas that the member has talked about, where he just wants Canada to take a unilateral action, the answer is no. We work with our partners, our NATO partners and our like-minded country partners, the Arab League, the African Union, collectively, to ensure we support the principles I have outlined.

We will continue to do that and we will continue to do that in Libya as well. First, we need to have the security, as we are doing in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little more about the irresponsible position of the NDP. I find it absolutely stunning.

In March 2011 Gadhafi was saying that he would fight for every square inch in his land and that he would die as a martyr. Even as early as August, the NDP was talking about abandoning the people of Libya.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary this. If we actually were to follow the irresponsible position of the NDP back in August, or now, what would the dangers be in terms of that stance?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, our country has been at the forefront in promoting democracy and the rule of law. We have been giving support to establishments and institutions that do that.

The NDP seems to think that we can go halfway and then turn our backs and disappear. As I have said, what the NDP is saying is very confusing and difficult to understand.

For my good friends on the NDP side, security remains a key point if we want to bring development to that country. Let us look at Afghanistan. With the security situation in Afghanistan, we were able to build schools, send girls to school, do immunizations and promote human rights and women's rights.

If the NDP wants to support Canadian values, it must recognize that comes with the price of supporting and engaging in missions with our partners, in this case NATO.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saatch—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree, as the Green Party, that the responsibility to protect civilians is the reason we became engaged in Libya and is our primary responsibility. There are troubling indications that the new rebel government is not acting to protect civilians if they are assumed to have ever been supporters of Mr. Gadhafi, including an entire family, women and children who have been shot upon because they have been mistaken for family members of Gadhafi. There is also the looming crisis for sub-Saharan migrant workers within Libya who lack human rights protection.

In this ongoing mission, I doubt that the Canadian Forces will be invited to protect those groups because the Libyan rebel government has said no foreign troops, whether United Nations or others, will come into Libya to help secure civilian safety.

How does the hon. parliamentary secretary see Canada's role in protecting civilians now?

• (1255)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question with regard to holding the NTC accountable. It is understandable there are concerns regarding that.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs visited with the NTC. He sat with its members and asked them to clearly show what plan they had to run the country on the basis of the principles of the rule of law, human rights and so forth.

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As well, as I just said, the Prime Minister has gone to the United Nations to attend high-level meetings concerning how the NTC will be held accountable for its actions and what it has to do. If disturbing reports should come out, I can assure members that Canada will make its views known to the new government in Libya.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify a couple of things because the parliamentary secretary took maybe a bit of licence with the past. He does that every once in a while and my job is to bring him back to what I think is reality.

The fact of the matter is that we supported the no-fly provision from the beginning. He knows that. In fact, as my colleague said, it was not under NATO command and control when the no-fly provision was first brought in. I want to know whether he knows that. Can he tell us who was actually providing the oversight for the no-fly provision before NATO came into play?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely confused. With whom would he expect to have a no-fly provision? With the Libyan air force? It had to be NATO. Who gave NATO the mandate? The UN gave NATO the mandate. The UN has no forces there.

Let me get this straight again.

Mr. Paul Dewar: The U.S.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, with whom does he expect to have a no-fly zone? The task was given to NATO by the United Nations.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just to help my friend the parliamentary secretary, the answer to the question I posed is the United States was the country that was actually engaged with the no-fly provision. It is important to have the facts. It disturbs me when I hear the parliamentary secretary say that NATO was in charge of the no-fly provision when it was not. We saw this before. I remember well in 2006 during the debate on Afghanistan when it was pointed out to the government that we were not under the command and control of NATO at the beginning. We were actually under American command and control. That is without prejudice. It was the fact, and we have to have the facts on the table.

I want to start off with some facts as we address the motion and the amendment that we have put forward.

The New Democratic Party was the first party to put forward the idea of civilian protection through the United Nations, through the no-fly provision. We took that position seriously because of the threat of Gadhafi on the Libyan people.

It has not been mentioned enough here today, but we took that position because Canada was responsible for Gadhafi being able to buy the munition that he was using against his own people. Canada was doing truck and trade with him, but that has not been brought up much by members on the other side. We were happy to have oil and gas contracts with Gadhafi. One Canadian firm was building a prison. No one talked about that, but the Libyan people knew that. They knew that the Canadian government was blessing Canadian corporations to trade with Gadhafi.

Let us be honest in this debate about what was happening. Make no mistake that we aided Gadhafi in what he was doing. NDP members were very clear in their position. We stood with the Libyan people and we said they needed to be protected.

We are going to hear a lot of other points from the government but let us have some facts here. I am not associating with any individual member of Parliament here, but let us acknowledge that Canada was collectively responsible for aiding and abetting Mr. Gadhafi because we were doing truck and trade with him. That is a fact, and I think everyone on the other side would agree with that. One corporation was building a prison. We know what was going on in the prisons. We only had to read the reports from Amnesty International and others. Let us not pretend that we did not know. Let us be factual.

What else did the NDP do? We said that we should protect the Libyan people. We said there should be a no-fly provision. Unlike my friends in the Liberal Party, we said it should be through the United Nations. A couple of days after we brought forward our position, the Liberal Party brought forward its position. To be fair to those members, they thought it could not happen through the UN. They thought the only way to go was through NATO.

Our position and our principle on this are very clear. I heard the leader of the Liberal Party suggest that he did not think it would happen through the UN. My goodness, we have to try. When it comes to multilateral action, the UN is the place we should approach to try to get acceptance for multilateral action. That is exactly what our position was and still is.

What happened is the motion was brought forward and we amended that motion. We worked with the government to amend the motion in the House. Everyone accepted the amendments we put forward. The amendments were to ensure there was a timeline of three months. That was the responsible thing to do.

We said there should be no boots on the ground, and the government and the other parties agreed with that.

We said that the motion should adhere to United Nations Resolution 1973. That had to be in the motion. It was not just about supporting the military component, which we agreed should be a part of it. We understood that. Let us be factual about that as well. We had to protect civilians and the way to do that was through the no-fly provision. We got that, but we had to have a timeline. We had to make sure this would not turn into a conflict with boots on the ground as they say.

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• (1300)

The second motion came before the House. Again, we thought it was important to put forward an amendment. We asked that reference to the disturbing phenomenon we have seen in the Congo and other places where rape is being used as a weapon of war be put in the motion. We asked that there be resources to ensure there is support for victims and an investigation of rape as a weapon of war. That amendment was from the NDP. It was absolutely critical for us to have that in there, because it is one thing to acknowledge something, but there also needs to be support. We worked to change the motion to include that.

There is something else that is absolutely vital when we talk about the situation on the ground in Libya. We added that this would be a Libyan-led reconciliation and reconstruction, that it was not the place for Canada or anyone else to dictate terms from outside. That is exactly what has happened in the past and we should not see it again, that somehow, because we supported intervention to protect civilians we would dictate the terms. That is the old politics in global affairs. I think the government agrees it should be a Libyan-led initiative. We added that amendment to the motion.

We also said that after three months we should end our support for the military part of the equation and bring the matter back to the House for review, and here we are.

That is the trajectory of our participation in this debate and the motions that were passed by the House. Today the situation on the ground requires a lot of heavy lifting in terms of reconstruction and civilian support. There are a couple of things which I think Canada could do.

[Translation]

First we need to have a comprehensive approach, including multidisciplinary support for humanitarian law, human rights, law enforcement, economic development, constitutional processes, election monitoring and other essential elements for state building.

Then we need civilian political leadership. Usually the Special Representative of the Secretary General is responsible for the arduous task of coordinating the efforts of the United Nations agencies, regional agencies and other governments.

Finally, the Libyan people have to take ownership of the peace building process and of establishing accountability of Libya's national institutions and political players.

• (1305)

[English]

On these three things and the idea that we can help with an overall approach, a multi-disciplinary and multilateral approach to help the Libyan people rebuild their country, is where we would like to see our focus.

That is why we amended the motion. We amended the motion to have that comprehensive approach and to make sure that we are not putting all our eggs in one basket. Frankly, that was our concern with the extension of the mission in Afghanistan.

As an aside, I am glad we are having this debate in the House because, unlike the case of the extension of the mission in

Afghanistan, we are able to actually debate it. Members will recall that when the government decided to extend the mission in Afghanistan, even though there was a military facet to it, we did not get to debate or vote on it in the House. I welcome the fact that the government is doing it this time. Frankly, it was one of the amendments we got into the Libyan mission resolution before.

The civilian political leadership that I referenced is usually something we let others do, but I think Canada has to do more here. There is a very large challenge in front of the Libyan people, and that is also the case in Egypt and Tunisia. There is a challenge of coordinating the actions of the UN agencies. People in the House who have worked on the ground for the UN know that coordinating the UN agencies is a really critical role and will dictate whether or not there will be success on the ground. I know that Canada has a lot to offer in this area. We should be putting our focus there.

Finally, there has to be an ownership of this by the Libyan people for peace-building. We know that the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is one that has had a lot of support from actors like Canada in the past. In fact, it was a Canadian who helped get it going. We have the capability to help with peace building, but we need to make sure it is focused on Libyans doing the development and the work in concert with other actors. I think that is where Canada could play a role.

It was said in the House by others that somehow the NDP is abandoning the Libyan people. I just gave an overview of how we were involved from the beginning. I ask other members of the House to at least acknowledge that we might disagree on how to get there, but let us be honest in that I think we all want to help the Libyan people. We want to help Libya rebuild. We want to make sure that they do not go back to the terms that they were living under before. Let us change the tone of accusation and talk about what propositions we have.

When we are talking about Canada's role in the world, I do not think it does us good service to attack the motives of each other. I think it would be helpful for Canadians to see that there are choices in front of us, although perhaps we disagree on those choices.

Hopefully members will have read our amendment. We believe that right now, since we have fulfilled our commitment of the motions that were passed in the House on the military side, we could put our focus on supporting the civilian and governance mission and put our resources there.

No one is abandoning Libya. No one is going to stand by and watch the return of Gadhafi. However, we can play a role by doing the heavy lifting in supporting development and governance. This is an area in which Canada has a lot to offer. We are putting this idea forward because we believe it is how we can support the Libyan people.

I have observed over time, particularly with the Arab Spring, that it is very difficult for nation states and countries to stay in for the long haul. It is easy sometimes to be there just for a short period of time. We think it is our obligation and our collective responsibility, for the aforementioned reasons of having truck and trade with the Gadhafi regime, not just to leave after he departs. We need to be there for the long haul to help with institution building and constitution making.

● (1310)

With regard to constitution making, think of what we have to offer.

In 2007 I was in Iraq. I was there because we were invited as Canadians to talk about constitution building, to talk about our example of a very diverse population that has different economic interests throughout and how we keep all that together.

The failure of the Bush administration to bring Iraqis in to look at how they would organize their country is a lesson for all of us. The Iraqis were asking me and other Canadians to join them in looking at how they could perhaps do things differently.

I think that is where Canada can play a role. The federal system we have here deals with a diversity of regional differences and linguistic differences. We have had lots of acrimonious debates over the years, and sometimes it is tough. However, we do it in a way that respects the diversity of our country. That is what people are looking for, and they trust us. That is what we should be offering right now as Libya looks to start anew.

The other thing we can help with is rebuilding their health system. I know of many Libyan Canadians who have already gone to Libya to help rebuild the system. Many Libyan Canadian doctors, on their own dime, have already gone and helped. We could be helping rebuild their health system.

When we look the opportunities for Canada to help, there are many. All we are saying here on this side of the House is that we believe we have done our share in terms of the no-fly zone. It is something we had advocated from the beginning. It worked. We actually kept it in our motion, making sure that there is an opportunity for us to help even more.

As we go through this debate, let us look at what each of us has to offer. What the NDP is saying very clearly is that we can offer continuing support to the Libyan people by making sure that we can provide Canada's excellence and professionalism in areas like institution building and making sure that there are services for all Libyans in their health system and in other areas.

That is what we can do. We believe that is the right thing to do right now. At the end of the day, I think that is what Canadians want. We are proud of our ability to lead internationally. We are proud of our capability to ensure that what we have here we can share with others, not in an arrogant way or a way that undermines the sovereignty of a country, but in a way that actually strengthens it.

I will finish by saying what I said at the beginning: we had a collective responsibility to act in Libya. Whether or not we should have acted is not the question; the question is how we should act now. That is what our amendment is about. That is what I think

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Canadians want to see. That is why I hope there will be some support from other members for our amendments.

● (1315)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech, as I did to the earlier speech by the defence critic for the New Democratic Party.

In both of the speeches there was an implication or innuendo that somehow the original motion had neglected the rebuilding part of what is so necessary in Libya. I think it is important for all members of the House, and indeed Canadians who may be watching this debate, to be reminded that the original motion clearly included the rebuilding phase.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to read a small portion of the original motion.

...that the House continues to support Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law

Later the motion goes on to refer to UNSC resolution 1973 and the "rebuilding of the new Libya", and to note that the House continues to offer its wholehearted and unconditional support to the brave men and women of the Canadian armed forces, who stand on guard for all of us and continue to protect Libyan civilians from the risk still posed by the Gadhafi regime.

In his remarks earlier today, the minister commented on our commitment to improving the access to humanitarian aid, improving women's rights, and improving religious freedom. The reality is that there needs to be security to have those issues advanced. How would the member envision these improvements continuing to be worked on without the continuing presence of our military personnel to provide that security?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to untangle the member's point, but he seems to be saying that our participation through UN resolution 1973 was about security on the ground. I believe that if he reads the text, he will see that it was to provide protection to civilians through a no-fly provision, but perhaps we can talk further about that later.

The point is about what is required right now. We amended the motion of the House earlier to ensure there was support for those who were victims of rape and for those who had to flee. Now it is a matter of what we need to emphasize right now.

We think we should be putting our focus on rebuilding, reconstruction and constitution making, if asked. Certainly we should offer. Again, this is about choices that we have in front of us. We believe the choices for Canada are very clear. We should go directly to help rebuild Libya and help it with its nascent democracy.

If we are not able to do that, I think we have failed. It is one thing to provide support to protect civilians, but we have to be there for the long haul and for the hard work ahead. That is what our emphasis is on this side of the House.

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Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will try to summarize the positions of the various parties. It appears that the government's position is largely one of extending military involvement, notwithstanding some wording in the resolution. The NDP's position is that it is time to withdraw the military and go with development and diplomacy. Our party's position is that we really need all three in order to achieve that. This is why we will be supporting the motion as amended.

I am somewhat disappointed in the position of the hon. member's party with respect to the phrasing "we have done our share", and my question in some respects follows the previous hon. member's.

Does the member not see that if we are withdrawing militarily, we will possibly create circumstances through which a conflict will continue, and that the very goals the member wishes to achieve basically through development and diplomacy will be put in jeopardy? In fact, if NATO withdraws and if Canada in particular withdraws, Gadhafi's loyalists will be emboldened, and there would be greater likelihood that this conflict would go on for a longer time rather than a shorter one.

• (1320)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague was wrong in saying that they were going to support the motion as amended. I am not sure if the position of the Liberal Party is in support of our amendment. We may need some clarification on that.

The member is getting a little ahead of himself, because he is saying that if we follow the NDP, the whole thing will be done and no one will be left to support the mission on the military side. We are following along the lines of what the House passed in terms of the two resolutions. I remember that the second resolution basically said that three months should be sufficient and that if we could not end things by September, then there would be questions about the whole thing.

We are not talking about withdrawal. We are talking about Canada's support for this part of the mission being done. That is what the House debated, and that is why we are here today discussing it.

If the member supports our amendment, which would change our contribution on the military side, I do not think he really believes that the whole thing would collapse.

We are talking about what is a priority for Canada right now. Norway and other countries supported the no-fly provision, then said they had done their share on the military side, and then focused on other aspects of the mission. That is what we are talking about: the rebuilding side. Those are the facts.

I would like some clarification from the Liberal Party members as to whether they are supporting our amendment or not. As I said, I would love the support and I look forward to clarification on that matter.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start off by thanking the member for Ottawa Centre for so clearly articulating the position of the NDP when it comes to the mission in Libya. As was stated, it is very committed to supporting the Libyan people.

However, we are hearing a lot of talk about the regime change in Libya. Could the member speak more to the distinction between this rhetoric and the actual purpose of UN resolution 1973?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, it is important to get back to what this is about. Although it has to do with the UN, it is not about NATO. It is about the Libyan people.

If we look at how we can best support them, it is by returning to the motion we helped to amend the last time there was an extension. It explicitly states that we will support a Libyan-led reconciliation and development. We believe that should be our focus.

Although I have not heard much about it today, some members on the other side had strayed toward the notion that it was actually about changing government. We can stay away from that language and still deal with Gadhafi. I said that at the beginning of my speech.

We supported Gadhafi by doing trade with him. Entering into contracts with him for oil or to build prisons made us collectively responsible. That is why we believed we had to act.

It has been implied by some that because we do not believe in taking sides in a conflict we have suddenly become Gadhafi's best friend. Of course that is ridiculous. That is why I say the tone of the debate is important. It is fine to disagree on how to help the Libyan people. That is what this place is about. There are choices in front of us. Our choice is to start helping the Libyan people by focusing on institution building.

I do not believe there is an air force under Gadhafi's control any longer. Certainly there are things that need to be dealt with. However, we believe that right now Canada's role should be one of helping Libyan civilians build institutions and rebuild Libya. That is what people want to see.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Ajax—Pickering.

I am very pleased to rise and talk to some of the things Canada has been doing to help the Libyan people and how we are involved with our international partners.

We are all familiar with the events that led to the crisis in Libya. On February 16, the Libyan people began rising up against the tyranny of Moammar Gadhafi. After four decades of oppressive rule, the people of Libya expressed their desire for change.

Gadhafi's response defies any comprehension. He attempted a brutal and bloody repression of the dissent. Gadhafi used the Libyan military to conduct operations against his own people. He pitted Libyan soldiers against Libyan civilians. The resulting conflict plunged the country into chaos. Countless refugees and over 685,000 migrant workers fled the country. Helping them return to their homes and countries of origin is a priority for the international community.

These events set the stage for today. Canada responded to the crisis with a whole-of-government response. While the Canadian International Development Agency never had a bilateral aid program in Libya, Canada responded to the humanitarian needs of the civilian population. Although the humanitarian situation is now rapidly stabilizing, some needs persist in specific locations: the need for water, fuel, medical supplies and humanitarian workers.

The reports of sexual violence against women deeply troubled our government. Accordingly, we helped protect women and girls from gender-based violence including sexual assaults. The Minister of International Cooperation announced additional funding in June of this year to address this issue. As a trusted partner, the International Committee of the Red Cross provides protection and medical services to women who have suffered sexual violence. In total, Canada has committed \$10.6 million, of which CIDA provided \$10 million, to our humanitarian partners. Those partners include the UN World Food Programme, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Population Fund.

Allow me to give the House a more detailed breakdown of how Canada disbursed its humanitarian assistance. The International Organization for Migration receives support for repatriating those migrants who had been displaced by the fighting in Libya. To date, the IOM has repatriated 208,000 third-country nationals to their countries of origin.

Canada gave support to the International Committee of the Red Cross to meet food, non-food, water, sanitation and emergency medical needs inside Libya and to support the relief efforts in Tunisia and Egypt. To date, the Red Cross has reached 780,000 people.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies received Canadian support for humanitarian relief, including food, non-food items and medical support to displaced migrants in Egypt and Tunisia. This support helped its members reach 200,000 people.

The United Nations World Food Programme provided emergency food assistance to displaced and conflict-affected populations in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

Our support to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees provided shelter, non-food items, water and sanitation for refugees and migrants who had been displaced to neighbouring countries.

The Canadian Red Cross Society received support from our government to transport humanitarian relief supplies from its stockpiles in Dubai to Tunisia.

As well, we worked with the United Nations Population Fund to help protect women and girls from gender-based violence, including sexual assaults, and to provide critical care to victims of gender-based violence in Libya.

In addition, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade contributed financial support to help protect UN humanitarian workers.

● (1325)

Let me bring fellow members up to date on the current situation.

Most of Libya, including Tripoli, is now firmly under the control of the interim National Transitional Council. Many nations around the world recognize the legitimacy of the NTC. Outside the UN last week the new flag of Libya flew as the international community met for a general assembly. Now that the NTC has been established, Canada hopes that a democracy will emerge over the next two years.

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In light of the urgent requirement to ensure stabilization, the NTC must focus on the essential tasks of establishing security throughout the country as well as delivering food, medical services and emergency assistance to people in need.

Libya is a relatively resource rich country with a per capita income of \$14,000 to \$15,000. That is why CIDA did not operate there in the past in an official bilateral capacity. As Libya's assets are no longer frozen, Canada expects it to lead the way and provide most of the funding for its reconstruction efforts.

On September 1, our Prime Minister attended the Friends of Libya meeting in Paris chaired by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. The meeting explored opportunities for international partners to support the NTC in its efforts to establish a democratic state.

Following the meeting, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would lift the economic sanctions since the brutal Gadhafi regime no longer held power over the Libyan people. Canada has re-established its diplomatic presence in Tripoli. As well, it has secured an exemption from the United Nations Security Council's sanctions committee to unfreeze Libyan assets so that the Libyans can meet their humanitarian and reconstruction needs.

The government will continue to monitor and assess the situation on the ground taking into account the needs identified by the NTC, the United Nations and other partners, including Canadian non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

We remain committed to the Libyan people as they try to put the brutality of the Gadhafi regime behind them. The job is not yet done. Canada remains committed to our Libyan friends in their quest for freedom and security. We cannot abandon them in this time of need.

Our Prime Minister gave a remarkable speech to the Canadian armed forces personnel involved in this crisis. I would like to read a section of it into the record.

He said:

...thanks to [our men and women in uniform], there is new hope [for Libya], which gives some proof to the old saying: 'a handful of soldiers is better than a mouthful of arguments.' For the Gaddafis of this world pay no attention to the force of argument, the only thing they [understand] is the argument of force. And that you have delivered in a cause that is good and right, and all Canadians thank you for the great job you have been doing.

Ladies and gentlemen, Gaddafi is now out of power—not yet finished—but his remaining control is inexorably ebbing away. And history will record this: that it was the good work of Canada's Armed Services—your work—working with our allies, that enabled the Libyan people to remove Gaddafi from power.

They used to claim that in international affairs, and you've heard the quote many times: 'Canada punched above its weight.' Well, to punch above your weight, you first have to be able to punch, and that is what you have done here. Numbers don't tell the whole story, but it bears repeating that the RCAF has flown—without caveats—more than 750 strike sorties against Gaddafi's forces—a good 10 per cent of the total strikes.

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Thanks to our men and women in uniform and thanks to our humanitarian efforts Canada punched above its weight again. We punched above our weight and helped free the Libyan people from the brutal oppression of Moammar Gadhafi. We must finish the job.

• (1330)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the defence minister talked about the overall costs for the Libya mission.

I listened to the member's speech with interest. I am wondering if she could confirm the price tag of \$100 million.

• (1335)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I will let the Minister of National Defence confirm those numbers.

I can confirm for the House that the international development money that has gone into Libya for assistance with humanitarian aid is \$10.6 million. We have assisted people who have been displaced by the conflict. We are working with our international partners like the International Red Cross to see that people have assistance with food, water and medical services.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is regarding the health and welfare of the population.

I would like to know if the main health priority continues to be injuries or if it is now secondary interventions? Are there shortages of life-saving products, including antiretroviral drugs, chemotherapy regimes, immunosuppressive drugs, insulin, psychiatric drugs, as well as blood products, dialysis supplies, laboratory reagents and vaccines? Can the hon. member comment on medical stock supplies now?

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I had the delightful opportunity to spend some time on Friday evening in Quebec City with the members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who were there for their annual meeting prior to their meetings in Geneva in November.

I am very pleased to say that the International Red Cross is very pleased with the assistance that has been given, particularly by Canada. The medical situation is under control right now. It feels that it is moving on to other humanitarian needs as they present themselves.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the hon. parliamentary secretary talked about in her comments was that there is a hope that in about two years there would be a democracy that would start to take hold in a bigger way than it has. Part of what we are doing is actually backfilling, along with the security that we provide, which is part of the solution. We cannot just walk away now when we are so close, as we are providing food, medical and infrastructure support to the people in Libya.

Since we have unfrozen a lot of the Libyan assets, that would now give the country and its people the financial ability to help rebuild. I wonder if that is an important part of what we will be able to help them with in terms of rebuilding needed things such as food, medicine and infrastructure.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is the hope of Canada that we see Libya move to a full democracy with fair and transparent elections. I am sure Canada would have a part in that.

Unfreezing Libyan assets has been very important to allow the Libyan people to start making their own plans for the future. Canada will continue to work with our international partners on all fronts.

As I said earlier, the International Red Cross is there on the ground. We have many partners there who are working with the Libyan people and Canada will be a tremendous asset for them in providing guidance.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in this House again in support of our continuing engagement in Libya. I also have enormous pleasure in rising in this House to add my voice to those paying tribute to our fighting Canadian Forces, to the men and women in uniform of our Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy who remain in action off the coast of Libya and in the skies above Libya.

This operation was already well underway when I joined the defence team in May. Even as our last general election was taking place, Canada had stepped up in response to the cries of the Libyan people under attack by their own government and under a mandate from the United Nations Security Council.

[Translation]

We quickly coordinated our military effort with the international community and thanks to the Canadian Forces' ability to deploy quickly, Canada was well placed to actively participate in protecting Libyan civilians.

• (1340)

[English]

When NATO took command of the international mission on March 31, the Canadian Forces were already well engaged. We heard some of that history reprised in the debate already today. We were active in the evacuation of Canadian nationals in February. *HMCS Charlottetown* had left port for theatre as early as March 2. Canada has been and continues to be at the forefront of the international effort to bring a peaceful and more stable Libya into being.

Thanks to the brave contribution of Canadian sailors and air personnel, Canada has played and continues to play a significant role in the NATO mission. We have contributed significantly with 6% of all sorties flown, 9% of strike sorties, and 7% of the air-to-air refueling sorties. A story that remains under-acknowledged in our media and in our debates is the story of maritime surveillance where two Canadian aircraft have played a role out of all proportion with our size delivering absolutely essential information intelligence about the deployment of Gadhafi forces on the ground to all of our allies and contributing mightily to the success of this mission.

[Translation]

HMCS *Charlottetown* contributed to ensuring the navigability of the waters to make sure that humanitarian aid could reach the people in need. It participated in the imposition of a weapons embargo and a no-fly zone. In this way, it helped in protecting the Libyan people, especially in the Misrata port region, and weakening an oppressive regime that was attacking its own people.

[English]

While performing its duties, as many members of the House will already know, the frigate was fired upon on two occasions by forces loyal to Colonel Gadhafi. This was the first time a Canadian vessel has been fired upon since the Korean war. In spite of this level of threat, our men and women in uniform successfully accomplished their important mission. They have paved the way for a democratic transition that we are now witnessing in Libya.

We have achieved much with our allies and partners in only six months. Today, the will of the Libyan people is being fulfilled. Colonel Gadhafi has been ousted from power and has gone into hiding. His ability to wage war has been reduced. The Libyan people are beginning to build a future under the guidance of their new government, the national transitional council.

Through the effective enforcement of the UN mandate we have saved countless lives. We are helping Libyans rebuild normal lives and take the future into their own hands. For the first time in 42 years the Libyan people are out from under the yoke of a tyrannical despot. This is the dawn of a new day for Libya.

The decision of the House to support the Canadian armed forces military mission in March and June was the right thing to do, and I am pleased to hear many members of the House acknowledging the depth, the richness of briefings we have all received or had access to over those six months. There were briefings in the committee on national defence, the committee on foreign affairs, as well as informal briefings of opposition leaders and members.

Even since our last briefing at the national defence committee last week, we have seen progress on the ground. The region of Sabha, which had been still under the control of pro-Gadhafi forces, came under the control of the new government, releasing a population from those bonds in which they had been held, opening them to the humanitarian assistance that is now flowing into Libya and making it possible for the new government to start delivering services.

We should be justifiably proud of these very concrete results that our men and women in uniform, and our civilian officials, operating with United Nations agencies, operating in NATO, operating with NGOs, have managed to accomplish.

While there is cause to be cautiously optimistic, we must temper our enthusiasm and resist the urge to hastily declare victory and go home. Yes, Gadhafi and his forces are wounded and on the run, but as evidence found, there is ongoing fighting in around the towns of Bani Walid and Sirte. He and his loyalists still pose a grave threat to the population of Libya. A share of the population in those central areas and the areas south of them may amount to 15% of Libya, but we cannot abandon those still in danger. That is why we must extend our military contribution and continue to work with our allies to ensure civilians in Libya are protected.

Government Orders

Simply put, there is still work to do. Even as the threat of Gadhafi passes, we must be mindful of the challenges ahead. It is up to the people of Libya to decide their future. We should be encouraged by the national transitional council's road map for transition, that it has begun to create a new Libya based on democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and reconciliation, values that we took with us in joining this mission and in agreeing to do so much under United Nations authorization.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Nevertheless, during these critical first days, we must remain engaged and offer our help to Libya, which is rebuilding and entering a new phase. Just as it was our moral duty to intervene in Libya when its people were being killed by an autocratic tyrant, it is essential that we continue to offer our support and participate in building the foundations of a new Libya and that we reinforce the significant freedoms that were gained as a result of Canada's efforts.

[English]

The challenges will remain numerous. The new government has to undertake immense tasks, restoring public security, establishing the rule of law, co-ordinating humanitarian assistance. It has to begin national reconciliation.

For all of these reasons, we cannot abandon Libya now. We must remain engaged. We must remain engaged until Libyans have a civilian government that is able to protect them itself.

[Translation]

Our military and diplomatic efforts, as the minister said during his speech, remain essential to achieving this goal.

[English]

There are still several campaigns under way, not only on a military one, a humanitarian one, a diplomatic one, and they are linked, as we have seen in places like Zabol. Without military progress, there will not be humanitarian relief. Basic needs of a vulnerable population will not be met.

In closing, let me simply remind the House that the reasons to stand against the Gadhafi regime, which brought us all together in two previous votes behind resolutions of this House, have not changed. It is simply not acceptable to assume that eroding defensive positions around Sirte and Bani Walid will just melt away, without a continuing effort on the part of NATO allies, non-NATO allies, and Canadian Forces. That is simply not true.

Government Orders

Nor is it possible to claim that Canada's civilian effort has lagged behind its military effort. It is simply not true. When the member for Toronto Centre tells us that \$10.6 million in humanitarian and other forms of relief is not enough, that releasing over \$2 billion, far more than any other country, to the Libyan government to help it deliver basic services is not enough, that the instrumental role of Canada within the friends of Libya group has not been enough, that re-opening our embassy among the first countries to do so is not enough, we part company with him on those points, even while appreciating the support of some members of the opposition for this resolution.

I want to thank the House for its support, for the brave men and women of the Canadian Forces. As the Minister of National Defence said, we cannot afford to leave Libya now. The gains, while substantial, are still fragile. The stakes are simply too high.

I encourage all members to support the extension of our mission in Libya.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to personally thank the military personnel and diplomats for their hard work in accomplishing the job that they have done so far.

New Democrats supported the Canadian military mission and its extension in June in order to ensure that civilians were protected from the Gadhafi regime. The member just very well acknowledged that Gadhafi has been ousted from power and that regime is no longer there. He also indicated that people from Libya need to decide their own future. We know that the conflict is coming to an end and, as one of my colleagues mentioned a while ago, it could be just a matter of days, if not weeks.

Since the conflict is coming to an end, does he not think, based on his comments, that we should not be there on a military mission, that we should actually be there providing civilian expertise and resources for humanitarian assistance and helping with institution-building and democratic development? Should that not be our role? If we get into all of these other roles and we continue going down this road, will we not be setting a precedent for every other civil war that is out there?

• (1350)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the reasons that led Canada to be involved in a military mission to protect civilians in March, renewed in June, are still there. There is absolutely no reason that any of us on this side of the House see to consider the well-being of civilians in Tripoli, Benghazi, now liberated, and Misrata as somehow more important than the well-being of civilians in Bani Walid and Sirte. This is one country. Libyans have the right to be treated equally.

The Gadhafi regime is out of power in the capital, out of power in most of the country. However, Gadhafi is still at large. He is still paying mercenaries. Members of his family are making inflammatory statements, threatening the life and limb of the most vulnerable parts of the population, including women and children, hiding themselves in schools and hospitals. And the member opposite wants us to drop the military mission, to give them, these tyrants, some breathing space.

This side of the House, this government, will never accept such hypocrisy.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, Ambassador Sandra McCardell returned to Libya. She made a clandestine visit and now she is moving back. Newspaper comments attributed to her having some business interests, promoting Canadian business interests, which I think are useful but possibly may be interpreted in a negative light by those who wish to see Libya transition to a fuller and more democratic state. It may particularly be seen in a negative light by those who think it is "all about oil".

I would be interested in the hon. member's comments with respect to the issue of how we, as a nation and as part of a larger allied effort, engage in North Africa so that the fears of those who reside in that part of the world will be assuaged?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member opposite knows just as well as we do on this side of the House that the main voices calling for the involvement of Canadian companies, of Canada's private sector, in the reconstruction of Libya and in the rehabilitation of the petroleum sector, which is the lifeblood of its economy, have been Libyan voices.

The new Libyan representatives to Canada have spoken in this regard. We have heard it from Libyan representatives at the many international conferences that have taken place. By encouraging our companies to be involved, as they were to some extent involved even before the conflict, we are simply responding to the deep-seated aspirations of the Libyan people to have an economy, to be able to pay their bills and to raise their standard of living after a year of hardship.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP supported Canada's military involvement and also supported extending the mission, in June, in order to protect the people of Libya from the violence of the Gadhafi regime. The NDP's support for the two motions was in large part motivated by and based on the doctrine known as R2P, responsibility to protect. Canada was particularly proactive in developing this doctrine at a time when it truly believed in the prevention of political crises and genocides at the international level.

There are a number of pillars, a number of important elements, in the responsibility to protect. The first pillar is that the state carries the primary responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. However, what this doctrine says is that when a government is incapable of protecting its population from such crimes or dangers, or when it is the perpetrator of possible genocides, war crimes or crimes against humanity, the international community has a responsibility—an obligation—to intervene to protect the population, provided that it has the agreement of the Security Council.

We supported the first two motions regarding the mission in Libya because of this principle, this doctrine. We can say that it was a great success. The intervention went well and the situation on the ground has drastically changed.

• (1355)

[English]

I heard my colleague opposite say that Gadhafi has been ousted.

[Translation]

Recently, we have also heard Libyan leaders saying that the horror is over. The situation on the ground is therefore extremely different from the one that existed six months ago.

In light of what I believe we can refer to as this success, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our soldiers and diplomats, who worked very hard to achieve this goal.

Now that the situation on the ground has changed so much, we must focus on other things. Our job is not to extend the military intervention but, rather, to provide the expertise and civilian resources needed to give humanitarian assistance to the people and promote the building of state institutions and the development of democracy.

Just two days ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, said that, a few months ago, the Security Council and a number of regional agencies and arrangements took on the challenge of taking accelerated and decisive action to protect the people of Libya from violence. He added that, today, we once again have to take accelerated and decisive action, this time to strengthen peace and democracy.

Canada can play an essential role in helping Libya to rebuild peace. It will not be easy. I would like to quote from a very interesting document that was published by the World Federalist Movement-Canada, which aptly states:

...post-conflict peacebuilding is extraordinarily complicated. Many states relapse into armed conflict, due to a variety of factors including persisting ethnic rivalries, lack of economic opportunities and social cohesion, and the inability of international actors to adapt their assistance to the political dynamics of the societies they seek to support. A transition to a democratic Libya, in an ethnically diverse country that has experienced over four decades of authoritarian rule, will not be easy.

This transition will indeed be extremely difficult, but it is essential. It is of the utmost importance. We must start now if we do not want to face other problems 5, 10 or 20 years down the road that might force us to once again resort to the use of bombers or other such action. We must seize this opportunity now. The Arab spring must be able to fulfill all its promises.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. He will have 13 minutes to finish his remarks after question period.

We will move on to statements by members. The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the achievements of one of my constituents, Jacynthe Geschke.

Jacynthe was recognized last night for her volunteer efforts with a community achievement award as the Naturally Autistic People Awards and Convention. This was one of only 11 awards given out worldwide this year.

What makes Jacynthe's achievement special is that she, herself, is a young adult with autism. Jacynthe participates in Naturally Autistic training workshops and provides insight as a speaker and role model. She enjoys gymnastics and working with horses and she shares this love by working with young autistic children in various programs.

By giving of her time, she is showing how those with disabilities can use their talents to help build our society.

October is Autism Awareness Month in Canada. I ask all members to please join me in congratulating Jacynthe who, in spite of her challenges with autism, is contributing to the lives of others. She is setting a good example for us all to follow.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the recent coroner's report on the suicides in Pikanjikum shows the systemic negligence being faced by first nation children on reserves across Canada.

Children are losing hope and killing themselves because they do not even have access to a proper school. However, first nation children are not giving up.

In her short life, Shannen Koostachin became the voice of a forgotten generation of first nation children. Shannen had never seen a real school but her fight for equal rights for children in Attawapiskat First Nation launched the largest youth driven child rights movement in Canadian history and that fight has gone all the way to the United Nations.

Shannen did not live long enough to see her dream of a proper school realized because she died in a tragic car accident, but her dream lives on.

Today, I will reintroduce Motion No. 201, Shannen's Dream, which lays out the steps needed to close the funding gap and give first nation children the opportunity for equal education.

This is what Shannen wrote before she died:

But I want to also tell you about the determination in our community to build a better world. School should be a time for hopes and dreams of the future. Every kid deserves this.

I thank Shannen.

*Statements by Members***MISSISSAUGA CHINESE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, I had the honour of attending the 20th anniversary celebration of the Mississauga Chinese Business Association.

Over the last 20 years, the MCBA has made significant contributions to our local economy and cultural diversity by increasing engagement and communication between members of the Chinese community, local organizations and all levels of government. The MCBA's activities aid in community integration and touch all aspects of community life in Mississauga.

During the anniversary celebration, the MCBA paid tribute to the Chief of Police, Mike Metcalfe, for his 40 years of service to the Peel Regional Police Force.

The dedication and selflessness of police officers are integral to our government's mandate to make Canadian streets safer.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak on behalf of residents of Mississauga and thank Chief Metcalfe for his 40 years of dedicated service to protecting our community and for making Mississauga the safe and prospering city it is known to be.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a group of seniors in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's who are proof learning is indeed a lifelong process.

The Random Age-Friendly Communities Office in Clarendville has been offering a program for the past three years, computers for seniors. The program has become so popular that currently there is a waiting list of over 40 seniors who are anxious to learn how to be computer savvy: how to use email, online banking, download government forms and a host of other tasks previously unavailable to them.

The volunteers who run the program are to be commended for their commitment, as are the seniors who, instead of refusing this modern technology, are now using it to make their lives richer.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating this fine group of seniors who are confirming it is never too late to embrace new ideas.

* * *

● (1405)

POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday thousands gathered for the 34th National Police and Peace Officer Memorial on Parliament Hill to honour the men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to keep Canadians safe.

Peace Officers from hundreds of agencies across Canada and the United States attended to witness and pay tribute to officers who had fallen in the line of duty this past year.

One of those officers, Constable Michael Potvin, served as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the small community of Mayo in the Yukon Territory.

For Michael's wife Allison, brother Sean, mother Patricia, father Mark and, most of all, his little boy Jack who, sadly, he will never know, Mayo, the Yukon and indeed the country mourns with them.

For the family, friends and colleagues of Constable Garrett Styles, Sergeant Ryan J. Russell, Constable Sébastien Coghlan-Goyette and Constable Michael Potvin, the four officers who died in the line of duty this past year, we are so very sorry.

We thank those fine young officers on behalf of Canadians for their service. Rest in peace. We salute them.

* * *

FOOD BANKS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 1, Moose FM in Elliot Lake will be holding its radiothon to drum up donations for the Elliot Lake emergency food bank. This annual event highlights the spirit of volunteerism and showcases the generosity of the people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing.

It is a sad fact that too many Canadians are turning to food banks as belts get tighter and budgets get squeezed. Many Canadians might think of hunger as an urban problem, but Food Banks Canada tell us that about half of Canada's food banks are located in rural communities.

While the government dishes out \$90,000 a day to high price consultants, volunteers and organizations are soliciting donations to fight hunger in their communities.

Whether it is organizations such as Moose FM in Elliot Lake and Kapuskasing, Jane's Pantry in Iron Bridge, Iris House in Wawa, Le Samaritain du Nord in Hearst, Manitoulin Help Centre, or all those who donate, these people deserve recognition for their dedication to fighting hunger.

I ask the House to join me in thanking them for their advocacy.

* * *

NATURAL DISASTER

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 21, an F3 tornado with winds estimated to have reached 280 kilometres per hour tore through the town of Goderich, Benmiller and surrounding areas, causing severe damage. The downtown business community was devastated and residential homes were torn to shreds.

Over the last month citizens of Goderich, businesses, municipalities and NGOs have worked selflessly to cut down trees, remove rubble and help neighbours in need.

I would like to commend all of the police officers, firefighters and emergency personnel from Huron county and across the province who responded quickly and worked around the clock to clean up the destruction left by the tornado.

I would also like to recognize the leadership of the Mayor, Deb Shewfelt, council and staff for their hard work and perseverance in uniting this community and rebuilding the town of Goderich after its worst natural disaster.

Together we will rebuild the "Prettiest Town in Canada".

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's top priority remains completing the economy recovery. Canadians and the voters of North Vancouver gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to stay focused on what matters: creating jobs and economic growth.

Canada has now created nearly 600,000 net new jobs since July 2009. That is why our Conservative government is staying the course with our low tax plan to create jobs and growth. The last thing the Canadian economy needs is a massive NDP tax hike that would kill jobs, stall our recovery and set Canadian families back.

Our fragile recovery must not be put at risk by opposition politicians who want higher deficits, more debt and an end to Canada's historic status as a trading nation.

Instead, we must implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a program that calls for low taxes, enhanced training opportunities and expanded trade, which will preserve this country's advantage in the global economy.

* * *

• (1410)

IAN MACDONALD AND MAURICE SNOOK

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this August, shortly after the 69th anniversary of the raid on Dieppe, our community lost two veterans of that raid, Sergeant Major Maurice Snook and Lieutenant-Colonel Ian MacDonald, who died within days of one another.

Veterans Snook and MacDonald were two of the 553 soldiers of the Essex Scottish Regiment who fought at Dieppe. With their deaths, only five regimental veterans of the raid remain. While the raid proved to be a military disaster, with the death of 970 Canadians and 1,946 prisoners, it provided valuable lessons that were used for D-Day. The Essex Scottish Regiment alone lost 121 men with only 52 managing to escape. The remaining, including MacDonald and Snook, were taken prisoner.

Despite the hardships they endured in German prison camps, both men survived. They returned home, had families and built our community. They continued to be engaged with the militia, with Ian becoming the commanding officer, and both visiting Dieppe on the 60th anniversary of the Dieppe raid.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ian MacDonald and Sergeant Major Maurice Snook, as well as being active within the community, were living

links to an important part of our history. They will be missed. I hope that while they have passed away we will never forget their sacrifices and contributions.

Our condolences go out to their family, friends and the regiment.

* * *

POLAND

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was troubled to see that in last Friday's print edition of the *Globe and Mail* an article on the new war museum in Dresden used the erroneous phrase "Polish concentration camps" in reference to the Nazi German concentration and extermination camps in occupied Poland.

Polish citizens were victims of the brutal Nazi occupiers during the second world war. This phrase is offensive to the Polish people, who formed the largest home army resisting Nazi tyranny and fought shoulder to shoulder with Canadians on the western front. It insults the thousands of Polish righteous among the nations, who risked their lives to save Jewish neighbours from certain death in Hitler's death camps.

This is not the first time this erroneous phrase has been used. Canada has been clear in our support for the UNESCO designation of Auschwitz as Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi German concentration and extermination camp.

It is important for Canadians to be aware of this distinction, and I hope journalists will take this matter seriously and never again refer falsely to Polish concentration camps.

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BURNABY—DOUGLAS

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 2 the voters of Burnaby—Douglas elected me to represent them in the House. I am honoured to serve as their MP and to have been appointed by the late Jack Layton as critic for western economic diversification.

My main goal as MP is to make Burnaby an even better place to live within a more prosperous Canada.

To begin this work, I am meeting with local residents, elected representatives, businesses, unions and NGOs. I am also consulting the public to help set policy directions on two critical local issues.

The first consultation concerns TransLink's proposal to add a gondola to our local public transit network and includes phoning and surveying every affected household.

Statements by Members

The second concerns Kinder Morgan's proposed expansion of the Trans Mountain oil pipeline and includes surveying local residents and voters across the province.

I am pleased to announce that the results will be reported to residents as well as the House.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know our government's top priority remains completing the economic recovery. That is why Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to stay focused on what matters, creating jobs and economic growth.

We know that one in five Canadian jobs is dependent on trade. As the Minister of International Trade has repeatedly said, Canadians understand that free trade is a jobs issue, because trade is good for the Canadian economy, trade is good for Canadian workers and trade is good for Canadian families.

Today, the Prime Minister and the prime minister of the state of Kuwait witnessed the signing of the Canada-Kuwait foreign investment promotion and protection agreement. This agreement will help increase two-way investment, open new markets and support Canadian efforts to explore the growing investment opportunities in Kuwait.

This is a strong demonstration of our Conservative government's commitment to create the right conditions for Canadian businesses to compete internationally.

We know when Canadian companies succeed abroad, workers and their families benefit in my city of London and throughout Canada.

* * *

• (1415)

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DEMOCRACY

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the International Day for Democracy, I participated in the official founding of the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies, a diverse coalition of parliamentarians who have come together to promote and protect democratic principles, and in particular: to stand in solidarity with people struggling for freedom and democracy around the world, as in Syria and Libya; to strengthen democratic parliaments, particularly in new and emerging democracies; to advocate for greater and more effective democracy and governance assistance; to promote international norms that protect the rights of people to advance the cause of freedom and democracy.

[Translation]

I am pleased that the first decision made by this forum was to establish a task force to promote and protect democracy during the Arab spring and to stand in solidarity with the courageous people of Syria who are fighting for freedom and dignity.

LIBYA

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government is asking Parliament for authorization to extend Canada's mission in Libya by three and a half months in order to continue protecting innocent Libyan civilians.

The mission was launched in the wake of a UN resolution in March. Our government is proud of the contribution that the Canadian Armed Forces have made to the mission, which aims to protect the Libyan people from their leaders. Canada and its international partners must continue to show their willingness to see this through and help Libyans secure their future.

There is still plenty of work to be done, but each effort made by Libyans to help their country reach its full potential and continue its progress is important. Thus, Canada will stay in Libya as long as it takes.

Our government remains firmly committed to supporting the Libyan people in their next steps, so as to help them in their determined effort to rebuild their country and make the transition to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society.

* * *

KEYSTONE PIPELINE

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year the Transportation Safety Board recorded over 100 leaks in Canadian pipelines, including 23 leaks in the first section of the Keystone project, which is supposed to link Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico. The Keystone pipeline will prove detrimental to ecosystems, the rights of aboriginal peoples and the interests of workers.

By promoting the Keystone project, the government is placing the interests of big oil companies before the interests of Quebeckers and Canadians who are calling for more balanced economic development and better environmental protection for future generations. The government should put an end to this project, which is what the people want.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the global economy still fragile and too many Canadians still out of work, our government's top priority remains completing the economic recovery.

Our low tax plan to create jobs and economic growth is working, yet the NDP continues to promote its job-killing policies. The NDP wants to shut down Canadian industries and put people out of work.

Canada's oil sands are a proven strategic resource that creates jobs and economic opportunity in all provinces and regions in the country. The Keystone pipeline project will contribute to job creation and energy security in both Canada and the United States.

Our government will continue to promote Canada and the oil sands as a stable, secure and ethical source of energy for the world. The NDP is all too willing to abandon Canada's interests and sacrifice Canadian jobs. These job-killing policies are yet another worrying example that the NDP is not—

The Speaker: Order, please. Oral questions, the hon. member for Outremont.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Prime Minister released an important documented entitled "Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers and Ministers of State". Could the Prime Minister tell us if it is within the guidelines for a minister to run government funding out of his constituency office? Is it within the guidelines to have inaccurate and incomplete information provided to the Auditor General? Also, is it within the guidelines to have ministers interfere in spending reviews?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, and that would be jobs and the economy, not the mud-slinging by the opposition.

Let me say again that the facts have not changed. This issue has been thoroughly aired. The Auditor General had all the government information. There is nothing more to add.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the refusal to respond to the facts is telling. It is even more telling than the President of the Treasury Board's silence. Information continues to trickle out about the misappropriation of G8 funds. Access to information requests, searches and thorough research on our part were needed to begin to see the full extent of the minister's misbehaviour more clearly. We know that the Auditor General never received all of the necessary information.

The Conservatives are saying that they have nothing to hide. If such is the case, I would imagine that the Prime Minister would agree that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics should shed some light on the whole issue.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again let me say that the government has nothing to add because the facts have not changed. This matter has been thoroughly aired. The Auditor General had all the information that was required.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the minutes from meetings on the G8 legacy fund, the President of the Treasury Board told local mayors "...budgets in addition to the basic G8 Summit Management Office Budget must first be determined by the Prime Minister's Office".

Oral Questions

Can the Prime Minister tell us how his office was the one determining budgets for a local slush fund? How was his office involved in diverting money from the border fund to help the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka get re-elected?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat what I said. Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians. That is jobs and the economy, not the mud-slinging by the opposition. Again, the facts have not changed. There is nothing more to add to that.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Muskoka minister had many schemes for funnelling money into his riding under the pretext of the G8.

One scheme involved building a massive hockey arena and then telling everybody it would be used as a media centre. When the OPP raised questions about this pet project on security grounds, what was his reaction? The minister told local mayors that it was good news that the Prime Minister was filled with fury at police for daring to raise questions about security at an international summit.

Will the member explain why the Prime Minister was so furious at officials who were not willing to rubber-stamp his every whim?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of good news from the infrastructure funding in that area. Again, let me say quite clearly that our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, and that would be jobs and the economy. The facts have not changed. There is nothing to say. This issue has been thoroughly aired.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives have to bring in foreign affairs to cover up for the President of the Treasury Board, the fact is very clear that they have some serious explaining to do.

For example, they spent \$21 million on an Olympic-size hockey arena complete with a swimming pool that they tried to pass off as an international media centre which was never used. Also, the minister told local mayors that he would intervene with bureaucrats if they tried to check on the funding.

We know what the minister was trying to hide, but what is not so clear is why the Prime Minister was so personally furious when officials stepped in. What is it that the Prime Minister was trying to hide? When is the government going to come clean for the member's refusal to—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has nothing to hide. The facts have not changed. This matter has been thoroughly aired. The Auditor General had all the information that was needed. Let me tell the member again that that this government is focused on jobs and the economy.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance a question.

I know he has returned from Washington and from other discussions about the international situation. It seems pretty clear in listening to the debate and discussion that many, including the president of the IMF herself and others, have talked about the risk of too much austerity at a time when there is a genuine and real risk of a deep recession taking hold not only in Europe but across the developed world.

Does the minister not realize there is an equal risk to the dangers that cuts and austerity can pose to the chances of recovery?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to be focused on jobs and the economy. The world economic situation is fragile. We are seeing some weakening of global economic growth. Canada, of course, is relatively well positioned. Our economic fundamentals are strong. Our fiscal fundamentals are strong. In fact, we are the envy of most of the other countries in the G7 and for that matter in the G20.

Having said that, at the G20 summit in Toronto, the leaders agreed that we would carefully calibrate what needs to be done by individual countries.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand exactly what the Minister of Finance is trying to say.

Clearly, Canada, like the United States and Europe, is not immune to these problems. The president of the International Monetary Fund spoke clearly about the danger of excessive restraint. The Bank of Montreal economist said the same thing: we must not smother economic growth.

Can the Minister of Finance explain why there is no economic program or why there has been no discussion here in the House of Commons in this regard?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just the opposite, of course. There are a number of initiatives that our government is involved in with the public sector and private sector in Canada now. We continue work sharing. We have a new hiring credit for small business. I hope that the opposition parties, including the third party, would support these initiatives in the second budget implementation bill. We are continuing with our tax reductions which stimulate the creation of jobs in Canada.

Having said all of that, different countries will respond in their unique circumstances. We will be flexible and pragmatic in Canada.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would certainly be a refreshing change.

I would like to ask a question of the Minister of the Environment. It is very clear the government has a policy that promotes the

development of the oil sands and promotes the export of the oil from the oil sands. What is not clear—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Bob Rae: Wait for it; don't applaud too soon.

Mr. Speaker, what is not clear is that we have a policy with respect to sustainability. Could the minister tell us, why is it that the government has failed to develop a coherent approach on climate change, on the reduction of greenhouse gases and on producing a truly sustainable policy?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I assure my hon. colleague that cleaner air, cleaner water and active stewardship of our great natural spaces remain key priorities of this government, even in times of fiscal restraint.

I would inform my colleague that according to the World Health Organization, Canada ranks third in the world in terms of air quality. This is something all Canadians can take pride in. We take pride in our regulatory approach to greenhouse gases. We are moving forward sector by sector.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that approval of the Keystone XL pipeline project is a complete no-brainer. The problem is that, too often, the Conservatives act without their brains. The government did not use its brain before deciding to support a project that will harm our environment, our economy and our energy security.

Will the government listen to Canadians and think before saying yes to Keystone?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the oil sands are a proven strategic resource for Canada and that they provide jobs right across the country. The Keystone XL pipeline is going to contribute to job creation and energy security both here and in the United States.

Our government is going to continue to promote the oil sands as a stable, secure and ethical source of energy for the world.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really disappointing to hear that the government has one set of rules for its oil industry friends and another set of rules for the rest of us. How else can the minister justify a project that adds more greenhouse gas emissions to the oil sands, which are already growing so fast they are overwhelming any emission savings coming from other sectors? Why the double standard?

When will the minister finally stand up for Canadians and say no to this misguided project?

*Oral Questions***Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the NDP members should stop taking the side of the extremists who want to kill Canadian jobs. They have made it clear they want to shutter new development of the oil sands. They are willing to destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country.

They can go outside and join with those dozens of protestors, but we are going to stand with the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who depend on the oil sands.

• (1430)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their children, not a mass export pipeline that will pour away the benefits of our natural resources while leaving us with the environmental tab. The government is out of touch with the realities facing Canadian workers. Why is the minister selling out Canadians' jobs at the expense of our environment?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, let me talk a little about jobs. The oil sands development supports right now 130,000 direct jobs. It supports 390,000 jobs across Canada today. By 2020 that number will rise to 480,000, and if the Keystone XL pipeline is approved, with the extra product that will be shipped through there, the number will rise to 620,000 jobs.

Why is the NDP opposed to that kind of job development?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under this government, the National Energy Board has never worried about creating jobs in our country before approving the pipeline project. It is as though it does not think jobs in Canada are in the public interest.

Will the minister protect Canadian jobs by ordering the National Energy Board to assess the impact of the Keystone XL pipeline on Canadian workers?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member heard the last answer. Let me repeat that right now there are 130,000 direct jobs that are tied to oil sands development. There are 390,000 people across the country who rely on the oil sands and the development of them for their jobs. The number will rise to 620,000 jobs if the Keystone XL pipeline is approved.

Why does the NDP oppose that? It should get on board and support us as we move ahead, promote the economy and support economic recovery in this country.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of just exporting raw, unprocessed resources, when it comes to the economy, the Prime Minister has one message for Canadians and another for people abroad. In an interview in New York he

pointed to his own corporate tax giveaways that are not working and he said that trillions of dollars are sitting on the sidelines and that we have to get that money back into the economy. We agree.

When will the government practise what it preaches and take real action to create Canadian jobs? Where is the jobs plan?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid the member opposite was not listening last week. I think more than once last week we reminded the opposition that more than 600,000 net new jobs have been created in Canada since the recession ended. This is the best job creation record in the G7.

We need to continue to work on the unemployment problem in Canada, of course. We want to make sure as many people as possible are employed in Canada. I welcome any suggestions the member opposite has.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not understand the real need to take action on the economy to help people. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada recently declared that the government could improve the situation with strategic investments.

When will the Prime Minister listen to his own advisers? When will he support real job creators, such as businesses that invest, and not companies that keep their idle capital in their own coffers?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economic action plan has been very successful so far. We are into its second phase in job creation in Canada.

It is important to maintain strong fiscal fundamentals in our country. We see, from other countries in Europe now, the danger of accumulating deficits and large public debt.

One of the members of this House was in agreement on that point. She said that we know the situation in Canada is very different from that in the United States, that our debt to GDP ratio is the best in the G7 and that we do not have a debt crisis in Canada. Who said that? It was the member for Parkdale—High Park in August 2011.

* * *

• (1435)

PENSIONS

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, Canada's stock index plummeted 7.5%. That number represents billions of dollars in lost retirement savings for millions of everyday Canadians and yet there has been no action from the government to help ensure Canadians can plan for their retirement.

In a time of declining markets, will this out-of-touch government keep insisting that we roll the dice on more private pension plans or will it finally take real action to strengthen Canada's secure public pensions?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to actually tell the hon. member what we have done for retirement income for seniors. We have actually cut their taxes by \$2 billion, that is one benefit, through pension income splitting. I believe the NDP voted against that.

We have been consulting with Canadians. We have been consulting with our partners, the provinces. We have come up with a pooled registered pension plan that will actually provide a pension for millions of Canadians who now do not have one.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's half-baked pooled registered pension scheme is not good enough.

The government is simply insisting that hard-hit Canadians double down on the same private plans that have failed so many. What Canadians and provincial leaders are asking for is some basic retirement security.

When will the out-of-touch government stop gambling with Canadians' retirement? When will it increase the stable guaranteed CPP, QPP benefits that people can actually rely on?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind that hon. member that we have partners in this and those partners are the provinces and territories.

I spent this summer consulting with them. In fact, they do agree with us about a pooled registered pension plan to provide pensions to the 60% of Canadians who do not have a workplace pension plan at all. We think that is an incredible amount of people we can help. The pooled registered pension plan is a plan that will actually provide a pension for those folks to help them in their retirement. The provinces are onside.

* * *

[Translation]

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Champlain Bridge, the busiest bridge in Canada, has reached the end of its life. If it were to close, Montreal's economy would lose some \$740 million a year. That would mean \$740 million less for the Quebec and Canadian economies. That figure is from a Federal Bridge Corporation report dated January 2011.

Why did the Conservatives hide that report for nine months? Why are the Conservatives jeopardizing the Canadian economy and especially Montreal's economy?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for his question and his interest in the Champlain Bridge.

First of all, our government has invested resources in order to ensure that the Champlain Bridge stays open and is safe. We will continue working hard to improve infrastructure in Montreal and across the country. However, I would like to know why the hon. member voted against the investments that are keeping that bridge open.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is not going away just because the government is cutting science.

Canada is currently projected to reduce emissions by one-quarter of what is needed to meet its 2020 target. A government that leads instead of follows would have a plan in place for the remaining 75%.

Why is the government failing to take any moral responsibility for our children's future?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that we do have a comprehensive plan to meet our 2020 targets of reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 17% from 2005 base levels. We started with the two largest emitting sectors, transportation and now coal-fired electricity, and we will, with the assistance of the provinces and territories, continue to regulate other heavy emitters.

• (1440)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sustainable development of Canada's energy sector is key to our future but the government has failed to show any leadership. What the Conservatives do not understand is that it is impossible to have a strong economy without a strong environment.

With today's protest in Ottawa on the government's lack of leadership, when will the Prime Minister get his head out of the sands and produce a sustainable energy strategy for Canada's future?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is concentrating on what is important to Canadians and that is jobs and economic growth. He made reference to the oil sands. As I mentioned, the oil sands are responsible for jobs right across this country. As we are working with industry and Canadians to build our economy, we are also ensuring we are taking care of the environment at the same time.

[Translation]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just do not see that. Canada needs an energy strategy that recognizes that the economy, energy and the environment are all important. The government does not seem to understand that a strong economy depends on a healthy environment.

In light of the demonstrations taking place on the Hill today, when will the government come up with a sustainable energy strategy for Canada's future?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our government's focus is on jobs and the economy, and the energy sector, of course, is key to Canada's economic future. It employs hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country.

The collaborative approach we have taken with the provincial governments is working. It is helping to ensure that our resources are developed in a responsible manner. We are going to work with the provinces to improve regulations and diversify the marketplace. We look forward to a good relationship with them in the future as we have had in the past.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first we have the misuse of DND resources for fishing trips and lobsterfests and now we see the Minister of National Defence launch into a no-holds barred attack on the senior leadership of the Canadian Forces.

This past weekend, the Minister of National Defence told the Halifax *Herald* that "military accounting is like military intelligence, it is oxymoronic".

Why is the Minister of National Defence insulting military professionals and their work? When did the minister lose confidence in the Canadian Forces?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. I have nothing but the highest confidence in the military leadership on down through the ranks. They are doing outstanding work for us internationally with 16 different missions around the world, here at home and abroad. I continue to have the utmost confidence in all the men and women who wear the uniform of the Canadian Forces.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has also been reported that the Department of National Defence is losing public affairs officers because Conservative political staff are berating those in uniform and pushing them to keep a lid on bad news stories.

Why is the minister and the Prime Minister's Office trying to make these officials tools of the Conservatives? What are they trying to hide?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. He is using hyperbole. What we have are public affairs practitioners in the Canadian Forces who are in high demand. Clearly, leaving the military at a 20-year mark, especially after they have clearly established marketable and transferrable skills, is common. It is common in all departments. It is common in demographics throughout the Government of Canada. These are people who we value. Members of the public service in Canada are working very hard in every department.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the revelations about staff cuts in the office of the Minister of Defence by the Prime Minister's Office indicate that the Minister

Oral Questions

of National Defence has lost the confidence of the most senior officials of this government.

Is this due to the use of military resources for a fishing trip, or to attend a lobster festival?

Can the Prime Minister tell us his position on the personal use of DND resources?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said last week, I spent some time in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2010. At that time, I cut my vacation short to take part in government business. As a result of that trip, we have now confirmed that the military has said publicly that I took part in a previously planned search and rescue demonstration. Government assets are used for government business and that is what happened in this instance.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of leaks to the media indicate that there are major problems at the Department of National Defence.

The departure of a large number of public affairs officers over the past two years due to political interference and micromanagement by the Prime Minister's Office indicates that there is a deep malaise.

Is the mass exodus from DND related to this interference? Does the Minister of National Defence still control his department?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had an extremely high tempo of operations in the Canadian Forces over the past number of years, which also applies to the public servants, which is the civilian side of the department. As a result, many of the public affairs practitioners are in very high demand in the private sector and some have chosen to take positions in the private sector. We are grateful for their service.

As to leaks, leaks are usually as reliable as the courage of the individuals who come forward behind them.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week *The Globe and Mail* used the phrase, "Polish concentration camps" in reference to the Nazi German concentration and extermination camps in occupied Poland.

Brave Polish citizens were the victims of Nazi occupiers and not the perpetrators of their evil crimes.

Oral Questions

The reference in the *The Globe and Mail* article was an insult to thousands of Polish Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives to save Jewish neighbours.

Could the minister update the House on what our government has done to correct the offensive misconception about the existence of Polish concentration camps?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this important and sensitive matter.

He is absolutely right that it is offensive to the memory of so many Poles who fought the Nazi occupation and invasion and who have been declared Righteous Among the Gentiles to refer to Nazi concentration camps as being Polish ones.

That is why the Government of Canada has supported at UNESCO the official designation of the Nazi German concentration and extermination camps in occupied Poland.

Let there be no mistake about this point in history. The Government of Canada certainly asks that all people be sensitive to the legitimate historic concerns of the Polish community in this regard.

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GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's national public broadcaster has been increasingly underfunded under the government's watch. Since 2006, funding for the CBC has dropped to an all-time low.

The government is responsible for the slow silencing of Canada's only national voice. From deceptive propaganda campaigns to petitions circulated by Conservative members for its complete defunding, the government's plans for our public broadcaster are clear.

Will the Conservative government end its anti-Canadian venture and come out in clear support of the CBC and provide true and stable funding for this Canadian institution?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that question does not point out how out of touch the NDP members are with taxes and spending, I do not know what does.

The NDP members say that CBC is grossly underfunded, but \$1 billion is a lot of money. The CBC is receiving a lot of money from taxpayers. We have ensured that the CBC is accountable to taxpayers by ensuring that access to information applies to the CBC.

However, we also made a commitment to Canadians that we will balance the budget by 2015, and CBC will do its part.

[Translation]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the important achievements of the CBC in its 75-year history have proven its worth. The CBC contributes to Canadians' feeling of belonging. It is an important institution to Canadians from coast to coast.

Will the Conservatives stop attacking the CBC and finally support the only truly national broadcaster?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We will keep the promise we made to taxpayers to have a balanced budget by 2015. Therefore, we will ask everyone—all departments and all crown corporations—to come up with ways of finding the amounts needed to balance the budget by 2015. The CBC will do its share; that is certain. We are working with the corporation to find these amounts, and it will do its share to achieve a balanced budget by 2015.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has its priorities backward. It claims to be worried about crime, but it is cutting back the Canada Border Service Agency in Windsor itself, one of the busiest border crossings and a favourite route for gun and drug smugglers to go through.

How can this be about saving money when the government diverts millions of dollars of border money and infrastructure money into a G8 slush fund?

When will the Conservatives see reason, put public safety first, rescind these cuts and put Canadians' interests instead of their own interests forward?

•(1450)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have given this government a strong mandate to keep our streets safe, and that includes our borders. We are doing that by investing, we are doing that by ensuring that criminals receive minimum times for the crimes they commit.

We ask the NDP to get on board and support our crime measures, which include protecting our borders.

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SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian voters did not give the Conservatives a mandate to cut off the front-line services that protect our streets every single day.

They are also slashing 73 Service Canada jobs in Windsor alone. These folks process employment insurance requests from across the country and just won a national service award.

How does the Conservative member reward them? He actually gave them a pink slip and showed them the door. It is unacceptable.

What we have right now is money in the millions for consultants, pet projects and joyrides in jets, but cutbacks for those who help the unemployed. It is unacceptable and it has to be reversed.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to complete Canada's economic recovery and return to balanced budgets. Improving the way we deliver EI services to Canadians by modernizing is one way in which we will accomplish that goal. There are no Service Canada offices closing and no impact on in-person services offered. At this time it is premature to speculate on any specific impacts to any employees.

Our government is committed to effective and efficient use of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

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HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last first ministers' meeting on health care was in 2005, a year after the signing of the 2004 health accord. Since then, every report tracking the accord's progress cites lack of federal leadership for failure to achieve important goals.

The provinces, the Canadian Medical Association, the Wait Time Alliance and the Canadian Public Health Association all urge the Prime Minister to convene a first ministers' meeting as soon as possible.

Will the Prime Minister commit here and now to meet with the premiers? What is he waiting for?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since forming government, we have been supporting the provinces and the territories with the rollout of the present accord, which expires in 2014. We are committed to extending the 6% annual increase in transfer payments to the provinces and the territories while we negotiate the accord, but it is also important that the federal moneys sent to them are also improving the health outcomes of Canadians.

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G8 SUMMIT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House have been asking questions of the President of the Treasury Board about the G8 legacy fund for over a year. He has yet to answer one such question.

Will the minister, as part of the government that rode into power on the white horse of accountability and also as a former member of a provincial government that wreaked havoc on Ontario's books, finally stand in his place and explain his actions to Canadians?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians would like to concentrate on some good news.

Let us listen to what the best finance minister in the world said: over 600,000 jobs.

Let us see what the best justice minister in the world said. He said we focus on the victims, not on the criminals.

Oral Questions

Let us see what the best defence minister said. He said we will invest in the armed forces, which have done an excellent job in Libya, and the best Treasury Board president will bring a balanced budget to this government.

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[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the suicide rate in Canada has declined in recent years, in the aboriginal communities it remains tragically high. The most alarming statistic is the rate of suicide among young aboriginals, which is five to six times higher than for other Canadians. They have no recreational activities, no youth centres, no extracurricular programs and no hope.

When will this government finally take action to support young aboriginals and young Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, too many Canadians have to deal with the anguish of losing a loved one. That is why our government is funding programs that build on the strength of protective factors, such as ensuring family and community support systems are in place.

In budget 2010 our government invested \$65 million to implement the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy to assist over 150 community-based projects across Canada.

● (1455)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly, over the weekend a young person living in Cross Lake, Manitoba, took his own life, the second in as many weeks. His community has been asking for federal support for youth programming for a long time. Young people are still waiting.

Instead of talking about out-of-control youth, when will the government stand up and support young people in aboriginal communities so that they can gain control over their lives? When will the government act to put an end to the high suicide rates among Canada's aboriginal people and stand up for Canada's young people?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have recognized that there are issues with our first nations communities. That is why we entered into a joint action plan with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. We are working on four major pillars, including education and economic development.

These are ways that we can work with willing partners to boost the health and prosperity of our first nations communities. We are investing in the right areas and we will plan to continue to do so.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of International Trade signed a foreign investment promotion and protection agreement with Kuwait.

Our government's top priority remains completing the economic recovery. That is why Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to stay focused on what matters: creating jobs and economic growth.

Could the dynamic and hard-working Minister of International Trade explain to the House how Canadian workers and their families will benefit from the foreign investment promotion and protection agreement?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary Northeast for the excellent question and for his hard work to advance our job-creating pro-trade plan.

The agreement he refers to will encourage two-way trade and investment by providing certainty and predictability for investors. This will in turn create jobs and economic growth for Canadian workers and their families. Canadians intuitively understand that expanded trade is key to their long-term prosperity.

We will continue to take measures that broaden and deepen our trading relationships. It is too bad the opposition parties do not agree.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence continues to insist that his commandeering of a search and rescue helicopter for his personal fishing camp taxi was a logical opportunity for a training mission.

Out of the 30-minute ride that was taken, what new information did the minister receive? Specifically, what was the objective of the mission? What equipment was used? Was there an actual practical demonstration of the technician/victim hoist within the 30-minute ride, which is a principal use of that platform?

Could the minister confirm or deny that his use of this asset was originally turned down by—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the demonstration did occur.

Using the same calculations as the media and the member's party have been using, I now know that the member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor took a five-hour demonstration in a Cormorant. Using that calculation, that would be \$160,000 of taxpayers' money.

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[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has broken a promise it made to the Afghans who risked their lives alongside the Canadian Forces. The special immigration

program ended this month. It was a program that was supposed to allow Afghan interpreters to live in safety in Canada. Two out of every three applications were denied.

Can the minister responsible explain why this program was not changed in order to achieve its objective?

• (1500)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is mistaken.

Indeed, no commitment was made to the interpreters who worked with the Canadian Forces or with our international development agency in Kandahar. Three years ago we introduced a discretionary program, which included certain parameters to ensure that the applicants were qualified to come to Canada as permanent residents. The initial estimate was roughly 400 to 500 people and we will exceed that objective by welcoming more than 500 former Afghan interpreters to Canada.

* * *

[English]

LIBYA

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has played an active role in the UN-mandated, NATO-led mission in Libya. In light of recent events showing the anti-Gadhafi forces gaining strength across the country, could the Minister of Defence tell us why the continued mission in Libya is necessary?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said, the Canadian Forces are playing a key role in the enforcement of the international community's mission to support the people of Libya and protect them from the brutal Gadhafi forces. In fact, today parts of Libya still remain under the iron fist of Gadhafi. On the weekend, his daughter gave a broadcast that indicated such.

Our government is very proud of the brave men and women in uniform, and their families, whose leadership and efforts have been instrumental in this mission's success to date.

We will continue to work with our NATO allies and partners who enforce the terms of UN Security Council resolutions, and I urge all parliamentarians taking part in today's debate to support Canada's continuation with this important work in helping the—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[Translation]

TUNISIA

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is now refusing to be considered part of an electoral riding in a foreign assembly, even though the government agreed to such requests in the past.

This change will mean that over 15,000 Tunisians living in Canada will not be able to vote in the upcoming Tunisian election.

How can the government brag about supporting democracy in Tunisia when it is denying Tunisians living here the right to vote, even though other countries have no objection?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we had this question last week and we were quite clear. This government understands how important it is to Canadians to exercise their democratic rights, but new Canadians are particularly insistent on participating in our democracy. We will not agree to making Canada a riding in another system, in a foreign system. That is why we will continue to support the democratic transition in Tunisia without agreeing to—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to natural resources, the government only cares about short-term profit.

By way of evidence, the Prime Minister said that the economic case for the Keystone mega-pipeline is overwhelming, despite disastrous consequences for both workers and the environment.

Why is the Minister of Natural Resources trying to do everything he can to please big oil instead of listening to the hundreds of people here on Parliament Hill today who are opposed to the increasingly uncontrolled development of the oil sands?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, our government is concentrating on what is important to Canadians, and that is jobs and economic growth. As I mentioned before, the oil sands and their development are responsible right now for almost 400,000 jobs across this country. That is in every area and region of this country, and that number is expected to grow. That is how many jobs the opposition says “no” to when it bashes the oil sands.

We know the importance of getting the environmental challenges right. That is why we are investing in new technology. We are working with industry and the provinces to ensure the environment is protected as the economy grows.

Points of Order

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, arising out of question period, the hon. member for St. John's East seemed to be attributing a quote to me that would drive a wedge between the Canadian Forces and myself as minister.

I do not want to attribute motives, but it would appear that what the member for St. John's East was referring to was an article in a Nova Scotia paper that references a quote from the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Now it seems to be a case of mixed members or perhaps mistaken identity. I would like to give the member for St. John's East the opportunity to stand up and retract that attribution of a quote that I would describe as quite defamatory and insulting to members of the military in terms of military intelligence being oxymoronic.

I know the member would not want to leave any other impression, other than the correct one, before the House.

• (1505)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the member was misquoted by me, I certainly apologize and take it back.

* * *

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

BILL C-10—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order relating to Bill C-10.

Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act contains nine bills that have been before the House for much of the last five years. In fact, it has been 7,242 days since those bills were first introduced, if we combine them all. That is almost 20 years. There have been 187 speeches in this place and debate on 31 different sitting days.

I would have hoped that by now the opposition would allow members of the House to actually vote on that. It appears the opposition is looking to further delay and obstruct this bill.

Our government did get a strong mandate from Canadians to implement these policies from the last election. We committed to passing that bill within 100 sitting days. It is with this in mind.

[Translation]

Therefore, I would like to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, arising from question period, my point of order is about a mission that I went on where I joined the armed forces on a pre-planned search and rescue mission. I know exactly what happened there. It was an exercise off the coast of Fogo Island, as well as inland.

The minister did say, though, in his answer that it cost \$160,000 for five hours, which basically comes down to \$32,000 per hour. When we said to the former parliamentary secretary that it was \$32,000, he said that number was nonsense.

I would like for the minister and the former parliamentary secretary to get together and provide information to the House about what exactly the number is.

The Speaker: That seems to be a continuation of debate. If the member wishes, he can take it up at the next question period.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting one of many petitions from my riding of Hamilton Mountain today that calls on the House of Commons to ban asbestos in all its forms and issue a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities in which they work.

This petition is particularly apropos today when the leading asbestos exporter is in town asking for \$58 million from the Quebec and Canadian governments to develop a new asbestos mine. This is despite the fact that we know that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. It is banned for use in our country, yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos. It is more than ironic that we are taking asbestos out of Parliament buildings because of its deadly nature, yet we continue to export asbestos to other countries in the world.

To boot, as the petitioners rightly point out, Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, which the signators refer to as "corporate welfare for corporate serial killers".

It is time Canada started acting with integrity on this issue. The petitioners call upon the government to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

I know that the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse this petition, but let me conclude by saying that for the first time I find myself agreeing with former Conservative cabinet minister, Chuck Strahl, who is now joining the chorus of Canadians urging the Prime Minister to move on chrysotile asbestos.

● (1510)

TANNING BEDS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present today hundreds of names in support of my private member's bill in the last session of Parliament, Bill C-497. My private member's bill, which I plan on re-tabling in this session of Parliament, called upon the government to establish better labelling requirements for tanning beds to ensure that people understand that tanning beds are carcinogenic, that the World Health Organization has rated them as the highest cancer risk category, and that they do create melanoma skin cancer and other types of skin cancer.

We have seen hundreds of deaths per year from melanoma and other cancers caused because of exposure to sun and UV radiation. We need to ensure there is a positive public awareness campaign and the proper labelling of tanning beds, so that people are aware of the dangers they undertake.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Canadian wheat farmers in the Prairies want to retain the Canadian Wheat Board. A vast majority have clearly indicated that in a plebiscite.

This petition is calling for the government to be responsive of what the Canadian prairie farmers really want. We appeal to the minister responsible for the wheat board to do the honourable thing and listen to what those prairie farmers are saying and allow the Canadian Wheat Board to continue on.

It is with pleasure that I table this petition here today.

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to present today to the House of Commons a petition started by constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands, particularly Alisa Preston and the group of divers to which she belongs. They enjoy scuba diving. They love our marine environment and strangely enough one might think, they want to protect sharks. They have the fear that many of us have, having read the science, that the shark populations of the world are plummeting. They are primarily plummeting for one exotic dish, that of shark fin soup.

These petitioners, 400 in number and more flooding into my office every day from right across Canada, urge that the government take action to ban the possession of shark fins, so that we can bring this trade to an end.

With great respect toward those people for whom this is a traditional and cultural activity, it is time to put an end to shark fin capture and possession, and shark fin soup.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of people all over Ontario opposing a mega quarry in the Melancthon Township in Dufferin County, which will be about 2,300 acres. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to conduct an environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

FISHERIES

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition regarding the state of the fisheries.

For the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in many cases examples of mismanagement were in play, perhaps due to the lack of resources in the department itself, among other reasons. This petition specifically calls upon the government to initiate a public inquiry into all aspects of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, with an emphasis on fisheries management and to dismantle the current structure of DFO and put in place a model that takes into account fisheries science, with an emphasis on serving the fishermen who make a living from the industry.

I would like to point out that the vast majority of signatures on this particular petition are from Ontario.

IRAN

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table two petitions today, each of which speaks to and condemns Iran's fourfold violations of international law, namely, peace, security and human rights including: first, its standing violation of international prohibitions against the development and production of nuclear weapons; second, Iran's standing violation of the prohibition against incitement to genocide; third, Iran's leading state sponsorship of international terrorism; and fourth, Iran's massive violations of the domestic rights of its own citizens.

Accordingly, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to: first, adopt and enact the Iran accountability act now before the House; second, to adopt and implement the unanimous recommendations of the foreign affairs committee report on Ahmadinejad's Iran threat to international peace, international law and human rights; third, to sanction these human rights violations; and fourth, to hold the Iranian leaders to account before the International Criminal Court for their crimes against humanity.

* * *

● (1515)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Privilege

PRIVILEGE

NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROCUREMENT CONCERNING CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very reluctant to add to my original question of privilege but felt I must because of the government's late input on this matter last Friday in an attempt to misrepresent the question I presented to the House on September 19.

It continues to put forward a position that only the House can take. That is the substance of my argument. It is presumptuous on the part of the government to think otherwise. It has put forward the position that the notice for procurement of auditors, and its wording, was merely part of the government's "planning efforts".

I submit that the wording in the notice that categorically states an end date of July 31, 2012 upon which the work of the audit is to be based has only been put forward due to the fact that the government has a majority.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have both confirmed that the elimination of the Canadian Wheat Board has been "a staple of Conservative election platforms."

That being the case, one must ask oneself why the government had not placed such a notice at any time since taking office in January 2006. The reason is obvious. It knew that any legislation brought forth to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board would not receive majority support in the House and would in fact be defeated.

As I indicated on September 19, the presumption on the part of the government contained in my original submission was that the House and Parliament itself can be taken for granted. The government cannot let contracts to auditors as if the House and Parliament has spoken. That just affirms the government's fevered drive to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board.

In short, the fact of the notice appearing in the wake of the May 2 election and at no prior time speaks to the point that I have raised with respect to contempt.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, at pages 1398 and 1399, claimed that on two occasions the decision of Speaker Fraser did not apply to the matter I presented to the House.

I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in my citations of Speaker Fraser's ruling I acknowledged that there most certainly was a difference, one I would submit that prevented him from rendering a decision of a finding of contempt in 1989. The difference is that he acknowledged the fact that a technical paper on the goods and services tax was before the House by way of committee. In his opinion, that did constitute a public declaration of intent which prevented him from finding against the government.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader stated at page 1400 of *Debates* that I had implied that the "message on the MERX website was similar to the public advertisements placed by the former Liberal government in 1989".

Government Orders

My first point is that the parliamentary secretary has failed to even get his facts correct. He would be well-advised to have someone do it for him. The government of the day was in fact the Conservative government. The GST is a Conservative policy.

My second point is had the parliamentary secretary taken the time to either listen to or read what I had presented to the House on September 19, he would know that I raised the point that these situations are different. What makes them different is the fact that Speaker Fraser acknowledged that a technical paper was before a committee of the House that provided a fig leaf of legitimacy and prevented a ruling of contempt at that time.

I had previously quoted comments from Speaker Fraser's contempt ruling. However, I would rather re-emphasize this point than quote them again. Speaker Fraser's dissatisfaction with the course of action taken by the Conservative government of the day should serve as a guide in terms of what I am claiming is a more egregious contempt by this Conservative government.

● (1520)

Mr. Speaker, I would add one last ruling for you to consider. Due to timing, I will not get into the length of it.

On page 1399 of *Debates* the parliamentary secretary references a decision of Speaker Milliken of November 25, 2002, which I believe once again reinforces my argument.

I would again submit that the fact that the notice of procurement and the task force terms of reference clearly states that the operating premise of both is not that the government is seeking input related to a possible policy initiative but that it is the outcome of the policy, namely the definitive termination of the Canadian Wheat Board within less than a year. That is the premise upon which both must conduct themselves in terms of the MERX proposal and the task force put forward by the government.

That presumes that Parliament has somehow indicated that this is to be the outcome of government policy. Neither the House nor any committee of the House has at any time even implied such an outcome as acceptable in any respect. In fact, over the last several parliaments we will find cases that the very opposite is true.

I conclude by stating that the interpretations of the citations of previous Speakers by both parliamentary secretaries have ignored one salient fact. The situation relating to the matters I presented on September 19 related to the notice for procurement on the government's MERX website and the terms of reference of the ministerial task force are different in that no specific proposal has been presented by the government in terms of its budget. Nothing has been presented let alone tabled by way of a technical paper. No legislation in draft form or otherwise has been provided to the House or any committee.

While expressing concern about the propriety of government advertising, previous Speakers have acknowledged that prior references in terms of documentation by the government prevented them from finding the government of the day in contempt of the House. The most important point being the lack of such documentation, I would respectfully submit, justifies a finding of contempt in this matter.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his further submission and assure him that I will take it into consideration.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

LIBYA

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has 13 minutes to finish her speech.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we now need to concentrate on rebuilding Libya. That is what the Secretary General is saying. It is urgent. It needs to happen now.

It will not be easy. In fact, it will be very difficult. The country is very ethnically diverse and has been ruled by an authoritarian government for more than 40 years. Consequently, when we talk about reconstruction in Libya, perhaps we really should be talking about the construction of that country because there is so much to do. However, just because there is a lot to do and it will be difficult does not mean that we should not roll up our sleeves and take action right now. Too often, and we have seen this in many other countries, the international community intervenes to fix the main problem or the most obvious one, and does not provide a long-term solution for the fundamental issues and challenges.

And in such cases, the problems never stop and the international community, after 5, 10 or 15 years, needs to return to that country. We have seen this in Haiti, where the international community has intervened a number of times but never stayed long enough to ensure that the Haitians were on the right track in terms of leading their own development.

There are many challenges and there is a lot of work to do. So it is important that Canada begin that work immediately. Canada has specific expertise to offer here, particularly in terms of peace-building. Canada can contribute its expertise on human rights, can ensure that human rights are being respected on the ground during the next phases of development, and can ensure that Libya is able to develop institutions that will allow it to promote and monitor human rights issues.

Libya has practically no constitution or institutions. At the very least we can say that Canadians are experts in constitutional issues. We can provide some expertise.

There is also the issue of building democratic institutions. Again, I am talking about basic institutions, even just voting systems, electoral systems and slightly more sophisticated democratic institutions. In that I include engaging and energizing civil society and finding ways to bring together all parties in the conflict, and all the ethnic groups that Gadhafi made sure to keep apart.

Government Orders

There is also the issue of security. I am not talking about security ensured by guns and weapons, but security in the sense of creating a healthy society that by definition would be safer. That is the message we would like our Conservative colleagues to understand a bit better, even in Canada, because security is not achieved by building prisons. It is achieved above all by creating healthy, egalitarian societies.

In light of the more pressing humanitarian situation, we have to help. There is a tremendous need for medications and there are still problems with water supplies and other supplies. These are not things that can wait six months. These are things that have to be done immediately and for which Canada can offer its resources and expertise.

We must not forget the issue of the International Criminal Court because justice is another essential element of reconciliation. Again, Canada has traditionally played a key role in the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

● (1525)

One of the International Criminal Court judges is a Canadian. We should therefore work with this court to ensure that anyone who commits crimes against humanity is brought before this court.

With regard to crimes against humanity, reported cases of the use of rape as a weapon of war must continue to be investigated. Canada could play a leadership role on this issue and prevent such situations from occurring again. In all this, there is much to do and significant challenges to overcome. That is why we must begin work immediately.

We should also not work alone. We must work with other concerned nations and multilateral bodies such as the United Nations agencies involved. We must also work with NGOs. I was talking about helping Libyans to create a thriving civil society in their country. Many Canadian NGOs work throughout the world to support such movements. This is another important way that we could help.

We must work with others and with the Libyans themselves. We must not forget that Libyans must come first in this process, which I prefer to call a building process rather than a rebuilding process. Canada must be there to support Libyans, to help them and to offer them our resources—our expertise, which is incalculable, and financial resources as well. In this regard, we are wondering if the millions of dollars that will be spent on the ongoing military effort could be better spent on providing humanitarian aid and support of all kinds to Libyan authorities and the National Transitional Council to help them to rebuild their country.

In short, Canada must stay. As the saying goes, Canada must stay the course. Canada must stay in Libya for the long term, not just the short term. We are convinced that Canada could forego the military effort at this time and focus all its resources on providing humanitarian aid and support for the building of Libya.

I would like to reiterate that the NDP concurs with the statement that Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon made to the effect that, today, we must take accelerated and decisive action once again, this time to strengthen peace and democracy.

● (1530)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is with regard to the health and welfare of the people. We know that departure of medical workers, due to violence, added strain on the health sector. We also know that laboratory supplies are crucial to maintaining the already weakened disease surveillance and outbreak response systems. There is a shortage of essential supplies, especially vaccines, which may result in increases in morbidity and mortality of communicable diseases.

Could the hon. member comment on the rising reports of psychosocial trauma, especially among women and children, and what additional support is required to strengthen their response?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this very pertinent question. I talked about humanitarian aid and touched briefly on the issue of rape as a weapon of war. In a society such as Libya's, it leaves marks, both psychological and social, because ostracism goes hand in hand with rape. It can destroy entire families. Not only does it harm the victims, but it has a dramatic effect on their entire social circle.

How can children who have seen bombardments and people who have lived in terror for years not be affected psychologically after that? From a more medical or physical point of view, there are fairly disturbing connections. Almost everything is in short supply and some infrastructures have been destroyed. That is why it is vital to resolve these conflicts. Otherwise in six months, in one or two years, there will be even greater problems. We must take action now.

● (1535)

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, anyone who has followed events in Libya cannot help but be aware that humanitarian assistance is desperately needed.

I want to tell members about one of my constituents, Dr. Omar Bengezi. He is a Libyan-born plastic surgeon who has twice now led medical teams to the front lines of Benghazi. He is local hero in Hamilton. His team performed life-saving surgeries daily with virtually no equipment.

Dr. Bengezi recently described how his team had to take instruments with it because there was nothing to work with there. He had to improvise to keep the casualties alive, almost all of whom had multiple injuries. Here is a quote from him:

They had massive open wounds, and we didn't have drains...We used hospital gloves as drains inside the wounds. For some, I couldn't even do nerve repairs, there was no way to do nerve grafts.

Clearly, the injuries sustained by the people of Libya are horrific, and thousands of people are affected.

Government Orders

I have not spoken to Dr. Bengenzi about the motion that is before the House today and I would not presume to speak for him about the extension of the military mission. However, but his first-hand experience highlights for me the essential need for resources for humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the motion before us today does nothing to address that urgent need.

I am sure all members of the House deplore the violence committed by the previous regime against the Libyan people, and that suggests that we have an obligation to provide assistance.

Could my colleague tell us what Canada can do to provide this much needed assistance, and do we not have a moral obligation to act?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that question is yes, we do have a moral responsibility to act.

Indeed, people like Dr. Bengenzi are heroes who are helping on the ground, and Canada has to be there to help them.

The military intervention costs about \$10 million a month. That is what we think because we never really got detailed numbers.

Now that the situation is that there are still pockets of insecurities, but the terror has ended and the situation is relatively calm in most of the country, why do we not use that money instead to help people like Dr. Bengenzi, to help the people on the ground, the women, the children, the nurses, the doctors and everybody who is putting forth all their efforts to try to put an end to the tragic humanitarian situation and then rebuild that country?

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague across the way and I am a little confused. Those members are always talking about humanitarian assistance and the need to provide health care.

Has she read our resolution? It talks about the National Transition Council, the anti-Gadhafi forces to date and the fact that we are operating there with NATO in accordance with a legal mandate. However, Canada's engagement is in all spheres of rebuilding a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law, while the people of the Gadhafi regime had not only murdered but used rape as a weapon.

In terms of getting to the end of this so the Libyan people can have a full democracy, we hope within a couple of years, that cannot happen if we pull back. We have NATO representatives.

I wonder how the hon. member deals with that when our motion actually deals with those things about which she has talked.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, we are convinced that we must change the focus of the Canadian intervention and put all our energy—and that is where we disagree—on reconstruction, democracy-building, humanitarian aid, intervention and overall support for Libyans in their current efforts.

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member very clearly articulated the need for us to

transition in a major way from military intervention into providing humanitarian aid to rebuild Libya.

Canada has a very proud history as a peacekeeper and this would be a wonderful opportunity for us to once again send a strong international message that Canada is ready to build and support the infrastructure, facilities and health care for Libyans and to move away from a military commitment. This is not to say that we are going to leave Libya.

How does the member see this proceeding from here?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question. It is certainly not simple. As I was saying, the situation on the ground needs to be addressed immediately and we need to start building that country's institutions as soon as possible, because it will be a rather complicated task.

As for the most immediate needs for things like hospitals, food and water supplies, and so on, Canada, as always, must work with its partner countries and, more importantly, with the United Nations agencies that can coordinate the effort on the ground. Canada must support those efforts as much as possible.

As for a longer-term vision, there is the possibility of a first phase for the creation of institutions and for national reconciliation. A situation like the one Libya has endured for the past 40 years will, of course, leave its marks and leave some scars. We need to ensure that those marks and scars heal properly so that the country can rebuild itself. In that respect, what is most important is that we listen to the people of Libya so they can see the help and expertise we can offer them.

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex.

I am pleased to participate today in the debate on the motion before the House to extend Canada's continued engagement in Libya.

From the outset, Canada has shown international leadership and has been at the forefront of efforts to secure freedom for the Libyan people. We have come together as Canadians, both in the House and across the country, to support the protection of civilians in Libya, protection that we as Canadians often take for granted, protection that the Libyan people have been without for so very long.

The level of support from the international community has been overwhelming, beginning with the endorsement of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. There have been regular meetings of the contact group on Libya and, just last week, the Secretary-General of the United Nations hosted a meeting of several heads of state, attended by Canada's Prime Minister, to discuss the situation in Libya.

We have led the way in humanitarian, diplomatic and military support to the Libyan people and their cause. Our men and women in uniform have gone above and beyond the call of duty in this mission.

Libya today is very different from the one that existed when I last spoke to the motion that was before the House in June. Most of the Libyan people, including those in Tripoli, have been freed from the control of the Gadhafi regime. Much progress has been accomplished but Libya is not out of the woods yet. The new Libya is vulnerable. Its needs are urgent.

While the humanitarian situation in much of the country has stabilized, civilians still continue to suffer in the remaining pro-Gadhafi strongholds, including Bani Walid and Sirte. Heavy fighting has exacted a serious toll on Libyan families. In some cases, Gadhafi forces are forcefully preventing people from seeking refuge elsewhere. In several towns around the country, Libyans are without water, electricity, phone coverage or medical assistance. Medical supplies are in short supply and there are severe shortages of antibiotics and anesthetics. We remain deeply concerned by reports of the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and restrictions to humanitarian access. Efforts are ongoing to secure full, safe and unhindered access to the conflict affected areas so that these crucial needs can be met.

The crisis has not only affected those in Libya. The actions of Gadhafi forces have led to the displacement of thousands of Libyans and migrant workers into neighbouring countries, including Tunisia, Niger and Egypt. The welfare of these refugees and migrants is a serious concern, with migrant transit centres also running out of food and having to manage without water or electricity. Many migrant workers want to leave Libya but do not have the means, or simply, they have nowhere to go.

As Libya moves toward a period of recovery and rebuilding, Canada will continue to monitor the humanitarian situation and respond to the needs as they arise in Libya or on its borders.

Canada will continue to be an active and willing participant in the transition to a new Libya. This is a message that was delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs when he visited Benghazi in June.

At the beginning of this month, we secured the unfreezing of roughly \$2.2 billion of Libyan assets held in Canada and in Canadian institutions. After having fully assessed the situation on the ground in Tripoli, we have re-established our diplomatic presence in Libya, reopening our embassy in a temporary location.

For Canada, the challenge is clear: to help Libya stabilize so that it can build a solid political foundation for democracy and a strong platform for economic growth.

As we look ahead, it is not our place to tell Libyans how to reconstruct and build their country. On a structural level, the economy must begin to generate jobs, commerce and revenue. Politically, Libyans will move toward elections, a new constitution, justice and security systems. The National Transitional Council is mapping out plans to achieve this and we will support it.

In the immediate future, it will be important for the NTC to send early signals to the Libyan people that change is underway by providing citizens with basic services and security.

Timing is critical but so is effective assistance. Through experience, we have learned that successful stabilization requires a coordinated and coherent approach. Canada has led the call for

international coherence to ensure that our aid money is effectively spent and supportive of local efforts on the ground.

We will continue to work with our international partners to help support a made in Libya approach to stabilization. Our immediate objective is short-term and focused: to help Libya stabilize and to help the NTC get on with the job of building a new and free Libya. The capacity is there.

The NTC has identified a road map to begin the work of building a democracy and a strong economy. On August 10, it issued a constitutional declaration which paves the way for elections and democratic governance.

● (1545)

The declaration sets out a plan that envisages a transition period comprising eight months under NTC direction, followed by 12 months under a new general national assembly, with general elections expected roughly 18 months after liberation.

The NTC has asked the international community for support but it is determined, as are we, that the process should be Libyan-led.

Our government stands ready to respond. Our support will be focused, targeted and disciplined. Our support will adhere to the findings of the UN-led needs assessment process. Our support will be coherent within the framework established by the NTC and the United Nations, and with other key donors. Our support will help enable Libyans to take back control of their country.

● (1550)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my hon. colleague mentioned the reopening of the Canadian embassy in Libya. Did the Canadian government think it was opportune to reopen its embassy in Libya because it felt the security situation was stable enough in that country to allow it to reopen? Does the member believe that the improvement in civilian safety is connected to the decision to reopen Canada's embassy in Libya?

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, yes, some stability has returned to Tripoli but that is not, by any means, all of Libya. There still remains very serious ongoing violence, even today, in Bani Walid, in Sirte, and in other places in Libya. In fact, we do not know what will happen in the future in Tripoli. We sent a team to Tripoli. It assessed that the current status is safe enough for Canada to re-establish diplomatic resources there. However, we are taking this on a case-by-case basis. It is very fluid.

I will read for the hon. member a couple of quotes that Colonel Gadhafi put out just a couple of weeks ago. He said:

Street by street, alleyway by alleyway, house by house. The tribes that are outside of Tripoli must march on Tripoli. Each tribe must control its area and stop the enemy setting its foot on this pure land.

Do not leave Tripoli to those rats, kill them, defeat them quickly. You are the crushing majority.... There will be no safe place for the enemies....

He went on to say:

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The enemy is delusional, NATO is retreating. It cannot go on forever in the air. NATO be damned.

That is why we believe that NATO has to continue its mission until the Gadhafi regime has actually surrendered and the people of Libya are safe.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this particular debate, we in the Liberal Party have supported the initial presence and the extension and we will be supporting this extension. The job is almost finished and we want to finish it.

However, part of the motion discusses the fact that it will be up to three months. In other words, as soon as a decision is made that the job is done, our military forces will be returning.

I wonder if the hon. member could explain to us, because I am sure he knows this, what exactly will constitute the job is done. What are the criteria that will be used by Canada to decide that, yes, at this point, we may withdraw and we will withdraw? Because I know that we do not want to extend this any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, Canada is pursuing the NATO mission. The NATO objectives have been clearly stated. They are to continue until there is an end to all attacks against civilians, until such time as there is a verifiable withdrawal of the regime's military and paramilitary forces to its bases, and until such time as there is full and unhindered access to humanitarian aid to all those across Libya who need it.

Those are the parameters that would constitute the end of the mission.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what are our expectations of the new Libyan government to fulfill its commitments to freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Benghazi in June, he was shown a white paper prepared by the NTC, which is a route to democracy. It includes a transition period comprising 8 months under the NTC direction, followed by 12 months under a new general national assembly with elections expected in roughly 18 months after liberation. A draft constitution has been prepared and we would expect these provisions to be followed as soon as possible.

• (1555)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

First, let me state that since the outset of the Libyan crisis, the humanitarian implications concerned Canada, specifically the plight of hundreds of thousands of people trapped in conflict areas or fleeing for safety to Egypt, Tunisia and other surrounding countries.

Canada's \$10.6 million contribution to humanitarian relief since the conflict began is going a long way to respond to the needs of conflict affected populations. Our humanitarian funding helps humanitarian organizations to respond to specific aspects of the crisis. The funding provided by Canada amounts to \$10 million from CIDA and \$600,000 from DFAIT.

We allocated funds to the following organizations: the World Food Programme to provide emergency food assistance to displaced and conflict-affected populations in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt; the International Committee of the Red Cross to meet food, non-food, water, sanitation and emergency medical needs with Libya, and to support Red Cross and Red Crescent relief efforts in Tunisia and Egypt; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to provide humanitarian support in the form of shelter, non-food items, water and sanitation to people displaced to neighbouring countries; the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies to provide migrants displaced into Tunisia and Egypt with humanitarian relief, such as food, non-food items and medical support; the Canadian Red Cross Society to transport humanitarian relief supplies from stockpiles in Dubai and Tunisia; the International Organization for Migration to support repatriation efforts for migrants displaced into neighbouring countries by the fighting in Libya to return to their countries of origin; the United Nations Population Fund to help protect and assist women and girls from gender-based violence, including sexual assaults, and to provide critical care to victims of gender-based violence in Libya; and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security for the purchase of essential security equipment to enhance the safety of UN humanitarian personnel.

Those contributions made a vital difference in the lives of the Libyan people.

To deliver assistance effectively, humanitarian personnel require access to all of those affected by the crisis. That is why Canada called on all parties involved in the Libyan conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

The last few weeks saw very positive developments. On September 1, the Prime Minister attended the Friends of Libya meeting in Paris where he joined other world leaders to discuss how international partners could best support the National Transitional Council in its efforts to establish a democratic state. Canada re-established our diplomatic presence in Tripoli. Our embassy has reopened. Perhaps most important, we secured an exemption from the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Committee to unfreeze \$2.2 billion worth of Libyan assets. This is a critical development.

As a relatively resource-rich country, the Libyan people must lead much of the reconstruction effort. In light of the urgent need to stabilize the country, the NTC must begin the essential tasks of establishing security throughout the country and providing social services for the Libyan population. The \$2.2 billion of unfrozen Libyan assets will help in this regard.

In addition, the international community's ongoing assistance provided to meet the significant needs that still require attention, in particular as they relate to water, fuel, medical supplies and personnel, as well as the protection of migrant workers, is vital.

We continue to work closely with our international partners, including the United Nations, to monitor the evolving humanitarian situation and to provide our expertise and assistance in an effort to alleviate the suffering of the unwitting and unwilling population affected by this crisis.

● (1600)

Our work is not done in Libya. We provided an opportunity for the Libyan people themselves to remove the tyranny of Gadhafi. We must not walk away at this time of need. Our Libyan friends need our help.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing that migrants are seeking refuge in the capital and that most of their medical complaints are linked to terrible living conditions in the camps. The majority of people are staying in makeshift shelters without water, food, electricity or access to proper health care. We hear that they live in constant fear and are being intimidated and harassed. We also hear that many patients suffer from psychosomatic complaints and show signs of stress due to extreme anxiety.

Could the hon. member comment on the rising reports of psychosocial trauma, especially among women and children? I am wondering what additional support the hon. member would recommend to strengthen the response.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, it is true we are hearing increasingly alarming and awful reports about some of the atrocities that are being committed. That is why it is so important, as was stated by the last speaker, to maintain our military presence.

The conflict will not be resolved until Gadhafi forces are put to rout. As was previously stated, there still is a strong presence of Gadhafi forces and strong resistance. Although we have made an effort with the United Nations Population Fund to help protect women and girls from gender-based violence, we cannot implement those things unless we have the means to stop Gadhafi and his group.

That is why the debate we are having is so important. That is why we need to make sure that collectively we do what is necessary, which is to continue with what is necessary from the military standpoint to stop Gadhafi and his forces.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for outlining the myriad initiatives our government has taken to address specifically the humanitarian needs. Earlier today the defence critic from the official opposition implied that we are not doing enough in terms of the rebuilding of Libya. The speech we have just heard certainly indicates otherwise.

Earlier today the Minister of National Defence commented on our commitment to increase access to humanitarian aid and for the rights of women and religious freedom.

I would like my colleague to underscore what he began to answer in response to the previous question where the need for security is urgent if we are going to continue these important humanitarian efforts.

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Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga has risen a number of times in the House today and I want to thank him for his interest in this important debate.

He is absolutely right. We do need to rebuild and to help in the reconstruction. We do need to assist in the lives of those who have been adversely affected by the horrors of war and the atrocities committed by the Gadhafi forces. However, these cannot be possible unless we have the presence and unless the Gadhafi regime which is currently committing these atrocities is removed. We cannot do one without the other.

I cannot stress enough the importance of adopting this motion and for the House to agree that this mission must be completed. In order to do that we need to extend it.

● (1605)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to speak to the situation in Libya, a topic that we have been watching for several months and that requires constant vigilance.

As we know, the evolution of the situation over there, NATO's involvement and the future of the country are at the heart of discussions in Canadian and international politics. Here at home, parliamentarians have shown a great interest in this issue, both in the House and in committees. We have followed the various political, social and military events. We have kept a close eye on what was going on in Libya and we want to support the people of Libya in the stages that will follow.

My speech today will focus on NATO's involvement in Libya, the current situation, my opposition to the motion moved by the Conservative government and the importance of the amendments proposed by the NDP.

First, I would like to give a little bit of background on NATO's involvement in Libya.

As part of the so-called Arab spring movement, rebellions in Libya started on February 15, 2011. Five days after the conflict started in Benghazi, it had spread across the country. Then, two days later, Moammar Gadhafi's regime lost control of certain regions.

The people took to the streets to denounce the injustice, oppression, lack of fairness and obscurantism of the existing government. The courage and determination of these protesters impressed us all. Risking one's life to go up against an authoritarian regime that has been in place for over 40 years is deserving of respect and honour. These people had the courage to question the established order and to bring down a corrupt and threatening government.

However, from the beginning of these protests, Moammar Gadhafi's scandalous and widespread repression has outraged and shocked us all: indiscriminate attacks against civilians, massacres in a number of Libya's cities, massive offensive attacks against unarmed protestors, rape as a weapon of war and extrajudicial killings. In short, oppression under this dictatorship reached its highest level in four decades. This oppression threatened the physical integrity of the people and the stability of the region.

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Resolutions 1970 and 1973 of the UN Security Council sent a clear message: the international community will not let the regime get away with massacring a population, and it was prepared to intervene to stop the massacres. Under the responsibility to protect doctrine, the New Democratic Party supported the initial military involvement launched by NATO, as well as the renewal in 2011.

My colleagues and I hope that civilians will be protected, that Gadhafi and his troops will no longer be in a position to cause any harm and that the rule of law will return to Libya. That is why we deployed Canadian CF-18s in support of NATO's commendable, legitimate operations.

Canada conducted 820 air strikes, some 9% of all NATO strikes. Canada conducted 352 aerial refuelling sorties, some 7% of all NATO refuelling sorties. We conducted 85% of all aerial maritime patrol sorties, some 151 sorties. We dropped 600 laser-guided bombs.

We did our part. We did important work. We are proud of the work done by our soldiers. We are proud of their actions. I would like to personally thank them for their excellent work and I know that all of my colleagues, of all political stripes, join me in thanking them.

However, we are now in a different place. The reality is not the same as a few months ago and the needs have changed. The support Canada can provide has also changed and must adapt to the new reality. Tripoli has been liberated, the dictatorial regime has fallen, and fighting between forces loyal to the old regime and the rebels is limited to three cities. Life is beginning to get back to normal, particularly in the capital.

The balance that existed has been reversed. On the one hand, the Gadhafi regime has been limited and is no longer in a position to ensure the country's sovereignty or to make mass attacks on civilians. It has lost. The regime has been defeated.

The National Transitional Council, on the other hand, is recognized and supported by the international community. It has established and stabilized its positions in nearly the entire country and has achieved its first objective, which was to crush Moammar Gadhafi's regime. It has won. The people have triumphed over fear.

If we compare the situation from six months ago, or even three months ago, to today's, no one can deny that the country is doing better. No one can deny that the collapse of the regime is good news for the people of Libya in general. No one can deny that Libya is headed in the right direction.

• (1610)

The former government's frozen funds have been, for the most part, unlocked by the international community. These billions of dollars are now available to the NTC to begin the reconstruction of the new Libya.

Unfortunately, today's Libya lacks solid institutions, the rule of law, and national structures capable of meeting the people's needs. Libya is currently a country in need of humanitarian, logistical and technical support. The most worrisome threats today are the absence of the rule of law, corruption, a broken justice system and unmet basic needs. First of all, this country needs our expertise in order to build the future.

I will now get to the crux of the matter, the motion introduced by the government. A number of elements in this motion and the government's approach to this matter are of interest to me. I find some aspects disconcerting. The four main points in my speech are the military component of the mission, putting the rule of law at the forefront, protecting civilians, and Canada's role on the international scene. I believe that this motion does not take either the reality or the high-priority needs into account. It is not in keeping with the principles the government preaches.

First, on this side of the House, we deplore that the government's approach is essentially focused on military support, a role of the Canadian armed forces. We are proud of what our soldiers have accomplished. We are proud of their contribution to date. However, we believe that it is now time for Canada to shift its focus to humanitarian efforts.

Historically, Canada's strength has been its expertise in democracy, human rights, justice, and social and economic development. We must take advantage of our strength and focus our efforts in those areas. We do not wish to support continued military action in Libya and we do not believe that it is the priority. The military mission that began in March and was extended in June was to protect the Libyan people from the violence of the Gadhafi regime. We thank our military and our diplomats who worked hard to achieve that goal.

Today, the situation has changed and our action must change accordingly. The humanitarian corridors are open and safe. The basic needs on the ground are no longer the same. We must now build the foundations of Libya's future. We all know that the government will not provide the same resources to the humanitarian component as it does to the military component.

The \$10 million being spent on military operations each month is \$10 million that is not going to the Libyan people. The \$330,000 being spent each day is \$330,000 that is not being spent on rebuilding the country. From this point on, Canada's actions should not be based on the past or present, but on the future. We need to be fully dedicated to preparing Libya for the challenges ahead: creating a justice system, training police officers and developing democratic institutions. We must also support a new state structure that will meet the primary needs of the people both today and tomorrow.

There is a lot of work ahead of us and it is essential that we establish our priorities. From this point on, we must focus on civil resources. From this point on, Canada's humanitarian and technical resources must take over from our military support. From this point on, we must prepare for Libya's future.

Second, the motion states the desire that the House continue to support Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of the new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law, and that the House deplores the violence committed by the previous regime against the Libyan people, including the alleged use of rape as a weapon of war.

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Clearly, we cannot oppose those sentiments. What perplexes me is the restrictive aspect of this statement. Like all parliamentarians, we are in favour of the rule of law in Libya. Like all parliamentarians, we want to see the crimes of the previous regime punished. However, the rule of law cannot come before a representative political system is developed. It will necessitate the development of a fair and equitable justice system.

In addition, the National Transitional Council does not have a monopoly on virtue. In a recent report, Amnesty International reviewed the war crimes committed both by the Gadhafi clan and by the National Transitional Council: settling of scores, extrajudicial killings, public hangings, prisoners tortured or killed and arbitrary mass arrests of nationals.

● (1615)

So far, none of the people involved in these war crimes, on either side, has been arrested or tried.

If the government wants its position to be consistent, it must denounce the crimes committed by both sides. It must ensure that these actions do not go unpunished. It must ensure that Libya has the tools it needs to implement the rule of law in the country. We cannot allow those who have committed war crimes to build Libyan democracy.

All this brings me back to my first point. We must base our priorities on our values and on our hopes for the Libyans. If the government's priority is to drop bombs, so be it. Our priority is to establish a strong, fair and equitable Libyan society. For us, establishing a rights-based society involves prosecuting crimes on both sides, mainly through diplomatic and humanitarian efforts.

Third, the conclusion of the motion focuses on the protection of civilians. Of course, we want to do the right thing. Who in the House could oppose this? However, upon careful examination of the situation, we see that it is much more complicated than the government would have us believe. The structures of the former regime are not as easily identifiable as they were when the intervention began.

The operations of the Gadhafi clan are more subtle. They are not using the same level of deployment that they were three or six months ago. Forces loyal to the former regime are now more likely to be hidden here and there.

As a result, rather than massive bombings, upcoming battles will be ground battles, which will pose a real threat to the safety of civilians and will affect the local people's perception of the international community's operation.

In any bombing operation, no matter how surgical, civilians are often an unintended target that we wish to avoid. Perhaps the government sees them as collateral damage but, for us, the loss of even one civilian is a tragedy that must be avoided at all costs.

It is also important to remember that NATO is not planning to bring in any ground forces and the NTC will inevitably have to continue this military work. The NTC currently has the tools to do so. It has the weapons. It has the logistical and strategic support, and it has the tactical advantage. As representatives from the Canadian

army informed us in committee, pro-Gadhafi forces will soon be short on firearms and troops.

The Conservatives' approach once again shows the deep divide between this government and Canadian tradition in terms of international outreach.

Historically, our country played a peacekeeping role, a positive role, a proactive role. This government is only considering a military approach. This government chooses the easy route instead of deploying its resources where it counts. This government refuses to focus on the future of a country in need of solid structures.

Why does this government not come back to our country's strengths? Why does this government not come back to what has made us as a country appreciated around the world in the past? Why does this government insist on favouring weapons over humanitarian efforts?

In closing, the NDP opposes this motion because it is out of touch with reality. It does not take the future into account. It does not take into account the real support Canada can offer to Libya.

Accordingly, we are saying no to the motion as presented. We are saying no to the militaristic approach of the Conservative government and conversely, we are saying yes to humanitarian support from Canada and yes to the future of Libya.

That is why we have proposed two amendments to shift the focus of the motion from military efforts to humanitarian efforts. These two amendments put the emphasis on the real needs of the people. They direct Canada back to its historic mission. The Conservative government has to understand that Libya is more than an exchange of gunfire; it is more than bombings and it is more than a civil war.

Libya is a country of 6 million people who wanted to free themselves from oppression. These 6 million people turned their backs on dictatorship and chose freedom. These 6 million people now want to take charge of their fate, look ahead and build a better future.

Today, Canada's duty is to help Libyans build a modern society that reflects the aspirations of a people. A military mission is no way to achieve that end.

● (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for St. John's East, Afghanistan; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the speech by the member opposite and I appreciate her position, but what she needs to appreciate is that in order to deliver humanitarian aid to the people who need it in Libya, they must first have security, and that is one of the things we are putting forward here. We need to ensure there is security so that people on the ground can deliver the humanitarian aid that is sent from other countries. That is one of the important reasons we are extending this mission in Libya. If we do not first have security, we cannot have the humanitarian aid getting to the places where it is needed.

For example, in many of the remote parts of Libya, pro-Gadhafi forces are interfering with humanitarian aid getting to the people who need it. If the member wants to have humanitarian aid reaching out to people who need it across the country of Libya, she must first acknowledge that security is a necessary factor for that to take place.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my colleague that I am very aware of the importance of security in delivering humanitarian supplies, for example. When we talk about security to deliver supplies, we are talking about security on the ground. Right now, the NTC provides security on the ground to assist with the delivery of these supplies. Canadian troops are not the ones providing actual security on the ground, since we have insisted all along that Canada's military mission would not involve troops on the ground.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for her speech.

It is certain that once our military leaves, we will have a huge task ahead of us to help Libya, a country that has known only dictatorship and repression for over four decades. The Liberal Party, along with our leader, has taken time to consult Canadians of Libyan origin to find out what they think would be important to do when we help Libya. A number of members of this community work in the health care and medical fields. They suggested that an important role for Canada would be to help put in place health infrastructure, which, frankly, does not currently exist in Libya.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this suggestion as a way to provide assistance to Libya.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, if we pro-rate the funds currently being put into the military mission, it comes out to \$330,000 a day. If we were to allocate that money to health care instead, we could make some serious progress, I would like to point out. As a nurse, I had the opportunity to do some humanitarian work in West Africa. I know that all of Africa is in desperate need right now, so I imagine that Libya is too.

Yes, in my opinion, the priority should be the health care system and all other humanitarian needs in Libya.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Standing Committee on National Defence was at the briefings we had last week from Major-General Vance and Her

Excellency the Ambassador of Canada to Libya, Sandra McCardell. They clearly outlined that there is still a large area of Libya under the control of the pro-Gadhafi forces. They clearly stated that there are large caches of weapons and ammunition available to the pro-Gadhafi forces and that they have an ability to strike back and fight a hard fight.

We are witnessing that now. Members of the Gadhafi family are making all sorts of public statements about being prepared to be martyrs and about being prepared to fight to the last man or woman. We have to ensure that we get this oppressor and his forces under control so that we will have the ability for diplomacy and aid to be delivered.

I ask my hon. colleague if she would comment on the need to bring stability throughout the entire country of Libya and not just to the areas that are held now, and on the role that NATO still has to play in providing security for all Libyans.

● (1625)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, what I also took away from that meeting is that the Gadhafi forces have been reduced considerably and that they are limited to three main cities. So they are concentrated in one area. The NTC continues working hard on the ground to take control of those areas and to ensure the safety of civilians. The Gadhafi forces have been reduced considerably. The NTC is making good progress and we must continue to support it. I think it will be able to accomplish what it set out to do.

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague did serve in uniform herself and understands the importance of our armed forces and our military, and to follow up for my hon. colleague over there who asked the question about costs, I will say that we know military intervention is very expensive.

My question to my hon. colleague for Abitibi—Témiscamingue is this: does she think the money would be better spent on helping to actually rebuild Libya rather than on military intervention?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the money that was invested in the military mission, before the events of the past few weeks, was necessary. We had to invest on a military level in order to help the NTC bring down Moammar Gadhafi. Now that the regime has fallen, now that Tripoli has been taken and the situation in that country is on the right track, it is time to redirect that money towards humanitarian needs.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue—

[Translation]

First I want to congratulate the hon. member on her speech. It was very strong, and I agree with the points she raised. Like her, I am very worried about the other crimes, not just those committed by the forces who support Mr. Gadhafi, but also those of the transitional government, which is committing other crimes against young people in the civilian population. They may be especially misinterpreted as being committed by pro-Gadhafi forces, when that is not the case. It may be a case of confusion.

What does the hon. member think of the threats that are weighing on the civilian population of Libya?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet the ambassador when she came to a meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence. I had the opportunity to ask her some questions about that. The thing that came out of the conversation was the importance of diplomatic aid. Establishing Canadian diplomatic aid will help the Libyan people set up a justice system very quickly. Then the criminals from Gadhafi's camp and also the people in the NTC who have overstepped the bounds can be prosecuted quickly. This will prevent those people from being involved in building the new Libya. For that we need major diplomatic efforts, not military efforts.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here today speaking on the subject of Libya. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

It is a pleasure to contribute to this important debate. Today comes at a crucial moment in Libya's history and obviously in the history of Canada's relations with Libya.

As the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have repeatedly made clear, Canada stands ready to assist Libyans and their new leadership during this historic period of transition and change.

We were ready the moment the Libyan people needed our help, and from the onset we have pushed for swift and decisive action. We have shown international leadership with our humanitarian, diplomatic and military efforts. In the last month we have responded quickly with a number of steps to support the new Libya. While progress has been made, we are staying until the job is done.

I do not need to remind members in the House what happened back in the nineties in Iraq with Saddam Hussein, a dictator there. When he thought he had the support of the outside world, a number of people rose up, but when he did not get that support from the outside world, massacres and challenges occurred.

I do not pretend to make those two things the same, but we have started a job in Libya and it is important that we continue the job until the job gets done. That is what we are really trying to demonstrate here today.

Inspired by the actions in Tunisia and Egypt, Libyans took to the streets in January 2011 to protest their living conditions. The protests quickly spread and began to focus instead on the removal of

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Moammar Gadhafi and his regime. Within months, the civilian death toll had reached the thousands. It became clear to the world that outside intervention was necessary to protect innocent Libyans.

To demonstrate our commitment to the UN, NATO and our allies, Canada took up its duty and prepared for the mission that lay ahead. The mission continues to be that of protecting civilians but also includes the central factor of making sure that democracy, the rule of law and human rights continue to be upheld. My colleague from Calgary said earlier that when Canada looks at getting involved, we want to ensure that we have the opportunity to promote democracy, the rule of law and to deal with human rights, and in this case, protecting Libyans.

Libya's interim rulers showed the world a mass grave they had found, believed to hold the remains of over 1,270 inmates killed by Gadhafi security forces in the notorious 1996 massacre.

Gadhafi is still at large and to withdraw our troops from a country where this man still roams is really not an option at this point in time.

Canada has been at the forefront of NATO's mission in Libya to protect civilians since March 1, 2011. Canada's own Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard has been commanding NATO's military campaign in Libya since March 31, 2011. Six hundred and fifty Canadian Forces personnel, 15 Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft and three Royal Canadian Navy vessels have been working tirelessly to both achieve its mission in support of the Libyan people and to show Canada's commitment to its allies. They have successfully targeted military sites around the country, enforced a no-fly zone, and maintained a naval blockade without a single Canadian casualty to report.

We must continue to show our support and commitment to NATO and to the UN, as well as those countries with whom we fight against tyranny and oppression. To back out now, with Gadhafi still at large, would be an act of submission and surrender, and that is not the image that Canada can or is willing to portray to the world.

Libya is not Afghanistan. We are there to help the national transitional council rid its people of an oppressor and we will stick by our allies until this mission is accomplished.

Canada has been a member of the UN since the body was created out of the rubble of World War II. Canada's history at the UN is deeply entrenched. Mr. Humphrey, a Canadian, drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Canada has since been a part of every UN mission since 1957 and Libya is no different.

• (1635)

We must show the world that Canada continues to play a major role on the global stage, and we will take necessary actions whenever and wherever innocent civilians are being oppressed.

The national transitional council, or NTC, formed on February 27, acts as the political face of the revolution. It has been recognized by Canada, along with the UN General Assembly, as the legitimate representative of Libyan citizens.

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Canada has therefore positioned itself well as an ally to the NTC, and in doing so, could help ensure that it stays the course with its stated goals of creating a tolerant, stable, pluralistic democracy. Certainly, the foreign affairs minister has met with the NTC and we have every reason to be optimistic about Libya's future under its leadership.

Gadhafi's days are numbered, and when that number runs out, so will Canada's military mission in Libya. Until then, Canada must continue to show a commitment to our allies, to the spread of peace and democracy, and to the people of Libya.

Canada has made many recent moves to assist Libya's transition to democracy. On September 1, the Prime Minister announced the lifting of unilateral sanctions imposed by Canada in order to assist the Libyan people transition justly, safely and securely toward a democracy.

On September 13, Canada secured from the United Nations Security Council sanctions committing an exemption to unfreeze the \$2.2 billion worth of Libyan assets to be used for humanitarian needs.

We re-opened our embassy in Tripoli in a temporary location, and as soon as necessary repairs are made to our existing embassy building and appropriate security measures are in place, we could again start to provide the high level of service Canadians have come to expect from our embassies worldwide.

We are moving quickly and decisively to establish all necessary links with the new Libyan government and to resume all services for Canadians within Libyan borders. However, that is not all our government is doing. In addition to assistance in Libya, Canada will also work to support Canadian businesses in Libya, many of which are ready and anxious to resume their activities there.

Prior to the unrest, approximately 12 Canadian companies were active in the country and many more were exploring opportunities. Trade and investment form a critical dimension of Canada's relationship with Libya, and last year, Canadian merchandise exports to Libya amounted to \$246 million, nearly doubling since 2008.

Over time, Canadian companies have built a significant presence in that market. Some, like SNC Lavalin, Petro-Techna and Canadian Petroleum Processing Equipment, have been active in the Libyan market for over 20 years. They know Libya. They understand the challenges of doing business there, especially now, as many companies have had their operations and payments interrupted by civil war. However, our businesses also understand the opportunities that are now opening up in Libya.

We have much to offer Libya as it rebuilds its economy and infrastructure in the years ahead. Canadian companies are well positioned to participate in this effort.

Getting Libyans back to work and Libyan businesses back to business is critical to the stabilization and normalization of Libya.

The government has been working closely with Canadian businesses to seek their views. Officials on the ground in Libya and in Canada are providing information and support on a daily basis.

Together, we are exploring ways that Canadian firms can participate in restoring Libya's historically active commercial life. The need is great. Restarting and rebuilding Libya's economy is both a huge task and a significant commercial opportunity. It certainly will not be done overnight.

War, brutal dictatorship and historic underfunding have all taken their toll on Libya's infrastructure. Think of all the schools, hospitals and buildings that need to be repaired or actually built for the first time. Think of the telecommunications systems, pipelines and electrical infrastructure that requires servicing or upgrading. Canadians and Canadian businesses can help. They want to help.

I hope we can count on the support of all parliamentarians as we find new ways to support our businesses to help Libya overcome this difficult period and rebuild for the future. Canada has always been a positive force in the world, and we can be just that for the Libyan people.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said recently that all Canadians can be proud that our country has "punched above its weight" by leading the way in providing humanitarian, diplomatic and military support to the Libyan people.

As the new leadership of Libya focuses on the future, Canada's role will continue to be vital. Our commitment to peacekeeping, democracy, freedom and the rule of law takes precedence in every action undertaken by our great nation. This conflict is no different.

The threat posed on the Libyan people's fundamental human rights by Gadhafi's regime laid the ground for Canada's intervention. We will not leave until these rights are once again restored.

● (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, considering the insistence on keeping Canadian military forces there, do our colleagues in the government have information on the real capacity of Mr. Gadhafi's organization to respond?

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information at this point in time.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his very interesting and informative speech.

I wonder if the member could give us some sense of what he feels the remnants of the Gadhafi regime, which are still fighting today in Bani Walid, Sirte and other places in Libya, are likely to do if they were to hear that some members of NATO, such as Canada, were about to pull out of the mission, discontinuing their participation?

What does the member think might happen? Would they continue to wreak violence on the Libyan people?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that history has shown is these oppressive and violent dictators, if they think there is no support from the outside world, if they believe that people are not paying attention, would go back to their old ways.

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Quite frankly, we have seen statements from some of the families saying that it is just a matter of time before they can get back in and continue to run the country.

This is why I believe it is so important, more important than ever, that we stay the course, that we continue to work with the Libyan people, that we continue to work with the NTC as it sets up and moves forward toward democracy and the rule of law, and that we continue until the job is done.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned health and medical care.

We know that in many cities municipal services have collapsed or are extremely weak because of unpaid salaries, fuel shortages and departure of foreign workers. Garbage is piling up in some streets, increasing the risk of communicable disease outbreaks at a time when the country's disease surveillance and response system is weak.

I am wondering what further action the hon. member would propose to improve and help monitor health and nutritional needs, health care delivery, ensuring life-saving treatment for trauma and injury patients, and access to essential health care, including for chronic disease, restoring the medical supply chain for essential medicines, vaccines and other medical equipment, and strengthening the health system to deliver essential health services.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my speech, and I think everyone knows, one of the things that we moved very quickly to do, and it happened back on September 1 was to deal with the sanctions committee of the United Nations to unfreeze the \$2.2 billion worth of Libyan assets that is really required for its humanitarian aid.

I think we realize that Libya is a rich country. I do not believe that the assets and the money have necessarily been used for good or for all it could have been in the past. One of the things we recognized as a government was that as long as those assets were frozen, that would hamper the reconstruction, that would hamper the ability to deal with workers who need to be paid, and that would hamper the ability to get aid and medical supplies there.

That is why we acted on September 1 and we will continue to do so until things are restored.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if the member across would be able to elaborate on the government's plan for aiding in the democratic development of Libya as referenced in its motion before us today.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward to untie and unfreeze some of the assets for humanitarian aid. As we look at dealing with the NTC and at building ties with it, we want to work alongside the NTC so that it can do the things that it stated it is going to do in order to make Libya a democratic country again.

•(1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the Bloc Québécois foreign affairs and defence critic, I am pleased to be speaking before the House during this important debate.

Last June, our party reiterated its support for this mission for very specific reasons. And these reasons still hold true for us today, even more so because the results of the operation on the ground show that many civilians were saved and others were protected by the summer-long intervention.

To begin, I would again like to say that, for the same reasons, the Bloc Québécois will be supporting a limited extension of the mission. And that is particularly because of the results of the mission. Since June, we have seen significant progress. We are particularly proud that the armed forces, through targeted interventions, were able to protect civilians. The Bloc Québécois bases its renewed support for this mission on certain principles, and I feel compelled to review them. These are the principles to which we subscribe and which should continue to guide Canada and the other UN members involved in this action in support of a civilian population that is struggling.

First, the multilateral nature of the intervention is very important to us. It is organized and directed by the UN Security Council. Second, specific means were laid out in UN resolutions 1970 and 1973. And, finally, the ultimate purpose of the military intervention is to protect the lives of Libyan civilians, who were, I should say, fiercely threatened.

Today, particularly in this case, we can see that the results on the ground have been successful. However, there are still some areas that are under the control of forces loyal to Gadhafi. They are small areas, but there is still a threat. After the briefing that was held, the Bloc Québécois examined the situation, and we believe that it is still logical and relevant to engage in targeted interventions for a limited period.

It is important to mention that the international community's commitment in Libya is still an example of the application of the responsibility to protect doctrine. Members have spoken about it, and there are different interpretations of this doctrine, but we believe that the doctrine of the responsibility to share and protect is based on three pillars. One of them concerns the current situation more specifically. It has to do with the responsibility of the international community to take action in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations if a state manifestly fails in its responsibility to protect its population from one of the four major crimes.

Right now, everything indicates that the National Transitional Council does not yet have the ability to protect the safety of the civilians living in Libyan territory, and under the circumstances, the interventions targeting the pockets of resistance must be as delicate and appropriate as possible.

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The doctrine of the responsibility to protect is important. In this spirit of democracy, our party would remind the House and the government that the renewal of the Canadian mission in Libya, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, is one of the principles that gave rise to this intervention. The success of an effective intervention strategy in this case will of necessity depend on limited military interventions—especially at this time because the pockets of resistance are no longer found across the entire country—which should basically focus on the protection of civilians, in accordance with the UN resolutions.

● (1650)

The Bloc Québécois would also like to express its concern for and solidarity with Quebecers and Canadians of Libyan origin, who have been going through difficult times. However, a quick resolution is on the horizon and holds the promise of better days for Libya.

The Bloc Québécois's support for the government's extension of this military mission in Libya is based on the principles of respect for human life, respect for rights and freedoms, and especially respect for the political sovereignty of the Libyan people, who are fighting for civil liberties and a better life without suffering.

In our opinion, respect for Libyan sovereignty is essential. When the last bastions loyal to Colonel Gadhafi fall, Canada must withdraw quickly in order for a democratic transition to take place, allowing the Libyan people to govern themselves without any interference from outside forces.

It goes without saying that this is not a military intervention with the goal, as I just said, of taking away the Libyan people's right to sovereignty by invading or breaking up the country. On the contrary, this mission seeks to protect the lives of people intent on changing their political situation, which, at present, violates the freedom of Libyan civilians.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that he did not believe that the NTC was capable of protecting the safety of civilians on the ground. If the NTC is not able to protect the safety of civilians during ground operations, why did it not ask NATO or the UN to provide military assistance by deploying ground troops?

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue asked a very good question.

The intervention by ground troops goes completely against our current vision of the action that should be taken. As I said earlier, to be completely honest with the hon. member, I would say that the reports prove that the National Transitional Council is having difficulty providing security on the ground. In particular, it is having difficulty getting rid of the last remaining bastions that are still loyal to Gadhafi.

When it comes to a decision like this, it seems logical to us to stay on site for a few extra months to allow the NTC, which I would like to remind the House is recognized by international organizations, to take on the responsibility in an acceptable manner that will protect the safety of civilians.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the comments from the Bloc representative in

regard to its position on the whole Libya issue. There is no doubt that the Liberal Party and others inside this chamber have seen the value in terms of providing freedom for the people of Libya.

One of the questions that needs to be answered, and I look to the government or the Bloc representative, is this. Under what kind of circumstances would the member envision this engagement in terms of the role that the UN or NATO would play in regard to taking a position of when Canada should withdraw from Libya? To what degree does the Bloc see NATO and the UN providing guidance on that issue?

● (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his excellent question.

In our opinion, it is also the responsibility of the government to plan and to determine the context in which it will decide to withdraw the troops. We hope the decision will be made before the end of the proposed extension of the mission. According to the model established by the organizations on the ground, as soon as the liberation of Libya has been declared, an eight-month preparation process would allow for a free election to be held in Libya. Canada has to be able to determine both the context in which it will withdraw its military troops and the way in which it will provide support for reconstruction and help for victims of damaging crimes. The government has a responsibility to answer the many questions that have been raised as to where we wish to go from here.

[English]

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I begin by expressing the appreciation of the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for the Minister of National Defence and his staff.

Throughout the summer, as the member for Scarborough—Guildwood has expressed, he and other members of our caucus received briefings from the Minister of National Defence and his staff. They gave us updates on the unfolding situation in Libya which were thorough, frequent, extensive and candid. We appreciated the openness the minister demonstrated throughout this mission.

I would add that I had discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I appreciated as well the diplomatic initiatives he took with the contact group and otherwise the sanctions that were levied against the Libyan leadership and the movement to bring Libyan officials, beginning with Colonel Gadhafi, before the International Criminal Court for accountability.

I would also like to recognize the exemplary contribution of our armed forces. It really is due to the professionalism and dedication of our Canadian Forces and that of NATO that we can discuss what is happening in Libya today in a manner that speaks to the rebuilding of a free Libya, a Libya free from the tyrannical regime of Colonel Gadhafi and his cohorts.

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I would like to highlight the work of our diplomatic representatives, particularly that of Sandra McCardell, the Canadian ambassador to Libya. We know that conflicts in this day and age are not simply addressed and won on the battlefield, but they also take place in the trenches of diplomacy. She has been a significant asset to Canada throughout the mission and will continue to play a very prominent role in the rebuilding process. As she and her family head off to Libya, my colleagues in the Liberal Party and I wish her safety and godspeed in her mission.

On this point of expressing appreciation, I want to express our thanks as well to the Libyan diaspora here in Canada and those outside Canada with whom our caucus has met singly and in groups. They identified for us the challenges that are confronting Libya today, as well as the opportunities. Some of those challenges which they outlined to us I am going to be abbreviating for reasons of time. They would be far more elaborate and clear were I able to convey them as they were initially conveyed in their deliberations with us.

First, they spoke of leadership issues. Gadhafi had effectively eliminated most of the political elite, including opposition figures in exile. As a result of that, political parties and opposition groups were almost non-existent. Gadhafi therefore remained the only dominant personality in the political realm which now has to be reconfigured, rebuilt and redeemed.

The second was the issue of the remnants of a divided society. Divisions between eastern, western, coastal and inland regions would still be a factor, as would tribal divisions, though this to a lesser extent. In particular, reference was made to the division between Benghazi and Tripoli. Residents of both cities have a certain apprehension of the other gaining dominance, while Tripoli itself remains a certain complex mix between old residents who, although anti-Gadhafi, are nonetheless concerned about the control to be exercised from Benghazi, and Gadhafi loyalists who came to that city in later years. I do not want to over-exaggerate this point. It has been made by others, including in briefings by the National Endowment for Democracy, but it at least deserves mention in this catalogue of some of the challenges.

The third one is that of a weak security sector. Unlike Egypt, for example, Libya lacks a sophisticated security sector in particular. Under the Gadhafi regime, security was heavily privatized and contracted to foreign mercenaries. Therefore, no effective, sophisticated and viable security sector was developed.

● (1700)

The fourth one was a lack of economic infrastructure. Here, too, there was a bifurcated economic system where the oil resources were largely separated from the rest of the economy, which remain for the most part underdeveloped. The allocation of oil revenues, therefore, in a democratically developing Libya raises the issue of a resource-based conflict that could develop between competing regions. This is something we will have to monitor as well, led of course by the Libyan Transitional Council and government.

Finally, reference has to be made to the character of the violent conflict and the transitional justice that will evolve. Such a conflict as we have been witnessing raises issues of accountability and demands for retribution.

In particular, given our experience with respect to transitional justice in terms of developing international justice frameworks and reforms, we can assist the Libyan Transitional Council in this regard.

May I just close in terms of that which was conveyed to us about some of the opportunities.

The opportunities exist because of, in effect, the disenchantment with the Gadhafist ideology. That ideology never did take hold. Libyans at this point are seeking, and indeed welcoming, the notion of having free elections, mechanisms for accountability, and putting to bed any reference to that remnant of an ideology that was never embraced by the Libyan people themselves.

There is also a commitment to democratic legitimacy. The NTC itself has recognized the need for free and fair multi-party elections and the establishment of a provisional government. It has expressed commitment to bring together intellectuals, human rights leaders, trade unions and citizens in any transition process so that it goes forward in an inclusive manner.

In the matter of local government, an important point is that local councils largely superseded tribal ties to provide for more independent, transparent and accountable government. There is a developing healthy interaction. I am speaking here about the potential opportunities between the National Transitional Council and local councils. This will help to develop a governance that promotes both a democratic voice and accountability.

Finally, in terms of civil society, the emerging civil society organizations offer opportunities for civic participation and possibilities to build trust outside the lesser institutions that have been allowed to develop in terms of family and tribe on any national scale. Labour unions can play an important role here. Although they were heavily controlled by Gadhafi, they are one of the few groupings in the civil society sector that were allowed to exist under the Gadhafi regime, although the influence there of course remained.

I participated, as many members did, in the debate on Libya that we had in the House last March. At the time, I mentioned in the House and wrote at the end of February in a series of op-eds:

[T]he threats and assaults on civilians in Libya continue to escalate. ...Muammar Gaddafi vows to exterminate the "greasy rats" of civilians, who "deserve to die".

The continuing pronouncements by Gadhafi at the time led to ongoing condemnation and calls for action. Even opposition parties at the time in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco spoke of Gadhafi's genuine industry of extermination and the need to act, as did western political leaders, the European Union, the UN Secretary-General and the like. Interestingly enough, none of the political leaders who spoke about the compellability to act referred to the need to invoke the responsibility to protect doctrine. I was delighted that in its midnight session on February 26, the UN Security Council in its resolution then and later in March invoked the responsibility to protect doctrine.

As I wrote at the time:

Strong condemnation—without effective action by the international community—would be a betrayal of the Libyan people and a repudiation of the [responsibility to protect] R2P Doctrine. It is our responsibility to ensure this Doctrine is not yet another exercise in empty rhetoric, but an effective resolve to protect people and human rights.

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● (1705)

The two resolutions that were passed, in particular, resolution 1973 of March 17, authorized international military action against the Libyan government including a no-fly zone to protect the Libyan people, tightening the economic and financial sanctions along with calls for a ceasefire, diplomatic initiatives and movements toward self-determination for the Libyan people. This created a situation where not long thereafter, we were able to say that the international action authorized by the UN Security Council appeared to be working.

By the end of March the no-fly zone had not only been established, but enforced. A no-drive zone had effectively been implemented. Rebel forces that were on the cusp of desperation weeks before appeared emboldened by the United Nations' response. The international action was not a unilateral move by the United States or one in the absence of a UN Security Council resolution, but had been undertaken pursuant to two UN Security Council resolutions, the first invoking importantly the responsibility to protect doctrine together with targeted sanctions, and the second invoking the important no-fly zone and the accompanying initiatives to which I refer.

We had a situation that moved forward. This brings us to the present day where in discussions in the UN Security Council, Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe spoke of the challenges that still await us and the role we can play in that regard. He mentioned the security concerns that still obtain in that regard and which still need to be addressed and that the formation of a new inclusive interim government would be a crucial step toward national reconciliation and unity and to ensuring that all military groups were brought under a unified command.

Also, and this is something that bears mention and action, regarding the issue of arms proliferation, he echoed the concerns of others that it is imperative the National Transitional Council and the international community establish control over the large stockpiles of sophisticated weapons amassed by the Gadhafi government, including ground-to-air missiles, warning against the spread as he did of those armaments and the threat that they could fall into terrorists' hands.

Re-establishing control over chemical weapons and prospective weapons of mass destruction is of paramount importance. Indeed there has been the discovery of chemical weapons stockpiles, some of which have been discovered as recently as September 22.

Mr. Pascoe spoke of the uncovering of mass graves which indicated the enormity of the human rights crimes that were perpetrated by the Gadhafi regime. Evidence has to be gathered reliably for future accountability. All countries must co-operate—and Canada can play a leading role—with the International Criminal Court in apprehending the indictees and bringing them to justice.

We will also have to make every effort to prevent revenge attacks as he mentioned in expressing concern over the forced displacement of groups of civilians among the Tewerga and Gwailosh peoples, who were perceived as Gadhafi loyalists.

Another issue expressed today in the Security Council debate was the continuing concern about African migrants and other third party

nationals, over 200,000 of whom the United Nations had helped evacuate since the beginning of the crisis. He noted that many more remained in transit camps inside the country. We will have to move to the early processing of those in detention and greater attention to the security of those who continue to work in Libya.

Finally, reference was made by Mr. Jibril today in his address about the need to continue the unfreezing of funds. These funds are needed now in the rebuilding of Libya. The needs of Libya at this point, whether they be housing and electricity, rebuilding infrastructure which was decimated by the conflict, even the security matters relating to weapons retention and the like, will need the kind of funds that the assets can provide.

I will close by making reference to the fact that the NDP amendment that we have been debating effectively calls for the end of our military participation in Libya. It is not a position expressed by the leader of our party, nor one that our party shares.

● (1710)

House of Commons rules are such that this amendment cannot be further amended to ensure that support for this mission continues. Had we been able to amend the government's motion, then the text of our amended motion would have read as follows, and with this I move to a close. I will speak to the substance of what would have been our proposed motion. It is as follows: That, in standing in solidarity with those seeking freedom and better governance in Libya, and in order to protect the civilian population of the country from violent attacks from their own government, the House adopted government motions on March 21 and June 14, 2011 authorizing all necessary measures, including the use of the Canadian armed forces and military assets in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1973; that given the current military situation and the success of the National Transitional Council (NTC) and anti-Gaddafi forces to date, the House supports an extension of up to three months of the involvement of the Canadian armed forces operating with NATO in accordance with a legal mandate from UNSC resolution 1973; that the House continues to support Canada's engagement in all spheres in the rebuilding of a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development and the rule of law, as well as humanitarian and medical assistance in co-operation with the Libyan Canadian community; that the Government of Canada implement a broader engagement strategy with North Africa to promote democracy and stability in the region; that the House deplores the violence committed by the previous regime against the Libyan people, including violence against women, including sexual assault and torture as weapons of war, and including human rights abuses against migrant workers; that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Standing Committee on National Defence shall remain seized of Canada's activities under UNSC resolution 1973 and in the rebuilding of the new Libya.

This would continue to give us an active role with respect to the responsibility to protect doctrine and its implementation.

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It further states: that the House extends thanks to Canada's Ambassador to Libya, Sandra McCardell, and her diplomatic colleagues, as well as those working at the Canadian International Development Agency for the good work that they have done; and that the House continues to offer its wholehearted and unconditional support to the brave men and women of the Canadian armed forces who stand on guard for all of us, and continue to protect Libyan civilians from the risks still posed by the Gaddhafi regime, and give effective implementation to the responsibility to protect doctrine.

However, since we are unable to move this specific motion and since we cannot support the NDP's amended motion, we will be supporting the main motion.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Mount Royal is well known as an international legal scholar and I always appreciate his comments and speeches in the House of Commons.

I do not know if he had an opportunity earlier today to listen to the speech given by the opposition, the foreign affairs critic for the NDP, but I was confused and thought that perhaps the hon. member for Mount Royal could help me out with my confusion.

The NDP foreign affairs critic said that the NDP had decided to support the Canadian mission in Libya because of resolution 1973 in March and then they found that this resolution was still in place and a reason for supporting the mission in June. The hon. member will know that resolution 1973 called on all members of the United Nations to take all necessary actions to protect civilians, to enforce an arms embargo and to enforce a ban on military flights over Libyan air space. Then the member will also know that just 10 days ago the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 2009, which maintained provisions to enforce the no-fly zone, protect civilians and enforce the arms embargo in light of continued fighting in some parts of Libya.

Could the member comment on that inconsistency between those two resolutions on behalf of the NDP?

• (1715)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I think the inconsistency may lie in the fact that as a matter of principle the NDP has been a strong supporter, not only with regard to the Libyan situation, but with regard to the responsibility to protect doctrine, as incorporated in UN Security Council resolution 1973. That accounts for what we might say the generic commitment is with the responsibility to protect.

However, as the member for Toronto Centre noted earlier in his comments before the House, there were at the same time elements of the speech which were at variance with its own, not necessarily commitment for the responsibility to protect doctrine, but with respect to the application of that doctrine as it applied now to the Libyan situation. At one and the same time in the same breath one heard both a support for and opposition to the motion as proposed by the government. Therefore, in my view, that accounted for the inconsistencies.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question that is both connected to this debate and on a point I raised earlier regarding the work we need to be doing in our own country in terms of building communities, investment and development in our own communities. I specifically

look to the challenges we face in northern Canada and aboriginal communities. Would he agree that ultimately nations become stronger when that is the focus, rather than the military end of things, and looking ahead to the next chapter of focusing on developing, capacity building and the need to look at that both at home and abroad?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member, but I do not find a contradiction between working with respect to capacity building in the north with respect to working for aboriginal justice. Indeed, as I indicated, during the period that I was minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, aboriginal justice was a priority both on our domestic and international justice agenda. Certainly a commitment with respect to the north capacity building and the like have to remain a priority for us. The stronger we are as a nation, the better we will be able to make a contribution internationally.

However, this does not preclude our parallel obligation, particularly under the responsibility to protect. One might say we have a responsibility to protect domestically, but there is an international doctrine with regard to a responsibility to protect. It says that where we have a situation of war crimes, crimes against humanity and, God forbid, genocide, where the country in which that is taking place is unwilling or unable to do anything about it, or even worse, as in the case of Libya, is the author of that criminality, then under the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine the international community, and that includes Canada, has a responsibility to intervene and protect the civilians.

I might add that we are now in the 10th anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine. Canadians played an important role in the development of that doctrine. We look upon it as something which gives us a kind of international badge of pride, globally speaking, and that we can speak with a certain authenticity with respect to the implementation of such a doctrine, whether it be in Libya or elsewhere.

I do not want to use the same notion of that document domestically because they are different things, but in terms of having responsibility domestically, yes, absolutely we do, and that has to be an ongoing commitment.

With regard to responsibility to protect internationally, that is a distinguishable obligation under international law, which we helped develop, contribute to and we are now implementing. I am delighted that Canada can lead the way in that regard.

• (1720)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague again for his wonderful speeches and tremendous commitment to world peace and advancing the peace in many areas of the country.

I particularly want him to elaborate on the proposed amendment that we would have introduced had procedures allowed. It very much encapsulated a lot of what I think all of us as Canadians and parliamentarians feel when it comes to the issue of peace in Libya and our hopes for the people and the region for a peaceful future. Would the hon. member comment further on that?

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Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, the whole thrust of what we proposed, that would have been the substance of an amendment, was to give expression as to how the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine could actually be implemented on the ground in all its aspects.

The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine not only authorizes the use of military force, it authorizes the use of military force to put an end to the killing field. It authorizes the use, in this instance, of a no-fly zone to stop the rampant and indiscriminate killing and murder that was going on by the Gadhafi regime.

We believe the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine, and indeed the ongoing involvement it will have in the next three months of this mission, speaks to the importance of our involvement in all spheres of the building of a new Libya, including human rights, democratic development, the rule of law, humanitarian and medical assistance in co-operation with the Libyan government itself. In other words, we take the notion of our responsibility to protect as involving an ongoing engagement and involvement in the building of a democratic Libya anchored in the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law and democratic development and humanitarian assistance processes.

Mrs. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to make this question brief.

There are increasing reports that our responsibility to protect must extend beyond those people threatened by Colonel Gadhafi and must extend to those people who are now understood to have once favoured Colonel Gadhafi. How do we protect those people when we are not allowed by the transitional government to be in Libya to protect civilian populations through a UN peacekeeping force?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, as part of our engagement we will have to work closely with the National Transitional Council to ensure that the appropriate protection is extended to all groups, including protection against vengeful attacks, and that we move forward in such a way that we build a democratic and inclusive provisional government and a democratically plural society in Libya. I believe we can play a role in that objective.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to speak to the motion before the House, which seeks an extension of Canada's military engagement in Libya.

Canada has been at the forefront of international efforts in Libya, and from the outset has pushed for swift and decisive action. We are proud of the role Canada has played to support the Libyan people in their struggle to realize a new Libya. After 42 years of brutal dictatorship and one-man rule, the Libyan people have taken important steps to secure for themselves a brighter future.

The unanimous passing of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 sent a very clear message: the murder of its own citizens by the Libyan regime and the gross violation of the population's human rights would not be tolerated by the international community and would carry serious consequences.

Canada's armed forces have played a leading role in preventing attacks and the threat of attacks against civilians. We have played a

vital role in ensuring a positive outcome, but members opposite have lacked the will to see the mission to a successful conclusion.

In August the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, of which I am a member, met to discuss the ongoing situation in Libya. We heard from officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of National Defence.

At that time members discussed and debated the progress of the Canadian mission and ways in which Canada and the international community could improve the protection of civilians in the near and long terms. At that time the NDP walked out of the meeting and declared the mission to be at a standstill.

Just over a week after that meeting, most of the Libyan people including those in Tripoli, were freed from the control of the Gadhafi regime. The NDP could not have been more wrong.

Despite the progress that has been made, Libya and its people still need our help. The job is not yet done. The reasons Parliament voted to endorse military action still exist, and so it is our position that Canada's role in Libya must continue.

We must remain committed to protecting civilians under threat of attack in Libya and continue to work with NATO allies and partners until the goal of the mission has been met. We must continue protecting civilians and civilian-populated areas. We must maintain the no-fly zone and we must enforce the arms embargo.

As it did in many countries swept up in the Arab awakening, change in Libya came suddenly. Mild, peaceful protests were met with overwhelming force and violence by an autocracy that had long maintained its control through fear and its monopoly of power through the use of violence.

The Gadhafis, first the father and then the son, promised “rivers of blood”. They promised to make the people of Libya pay in blood. They called anti-Gadhafi protestors “rats” and mercenaries who deserved the death penalty. They called upon forces to cleanse Libya house by house.

The Gadhafi regime chose to wage war on its own people and included acts of sexual violence to further the regime's military goals. Canada has been at the forefront of those demanding that the regime halt attacks against its own people and ensure that perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice.

Canada was among the first to call for the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court and strongly supported the creation by the human rights council of an international commission of inquiry into violations of human rights.

● (1725)

When used as a weapon of war, rape is a war crime. When used to systematically attack, suppress and terrorize, rape can be a crime against humanity. We condemn these attacks without reservation. These despicable acts underscore why Canada is, and should continue to be, part of the NATO mission.

Libya is a country in the grip of fundamental change. International consensus for action has come in the form of clear and very effective UN Security Council resolutions.

The Canadian and international response that followed the passage of resolutions 1970 and 1973 is one of which we can all be justly proud, and we must stay the course, not only in finishing our military mission but also in helping to assure the final outcome.

Libya's success will establish examples for the entire Arab world about how the traditions and values of the Arab world, an ancient and honoured culture, can make the transition to freedom, democracy, genuine rule of law and human security. These are the foundation stones of economic and social development.

As the Prime Minister has stated, "We presume no right to tell the Libyans how they should govern themselves, nor do we have unrealistic expectations". It is not our place to tell the Libyans how to rebuild their country. We now expect the new government of Libya to fulfill its commitments to freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

We remain committed to supporting these next steps to assist the Libyan people in their determination to rebuild a peaceful and prosperous society.

In Libya today, as the old regime is justly swept into the dustbin of history, the people are coming face to face with these very challenges. The role of Canada and the international community is to help Libyans meet them and find Libyan solutions for a Libyan future.

Members across the way have been saying that Canada's military role in Libya is finished. They say that we have done our part.

As I said previously, the reasons for which Parliament overwhelmingly supported our mission still exist, and so do the conditions that prompted the UN and NATO to act. Civilians in some parts of Libya still face the threat of Colonel Gadhafi and his regime. They still need our protection. Our part is not done yet. For this reason, I urge all members to support the motion.

• (1730)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding enforcing the no-fly zone.

I was wondering if the hon. member could elaborate on what air force she is wishing to protect the civilians against. From all evidence, it seems that the Gadhafi resistance does not have an air force to speak of. What use does she see for the Canadian military's air force in protecting the civilians against whatever air force it is she is trying to defend those civilians from?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I want to let the hon. member know why we are in Libya. The reason for being in Libya is to protect the human rights of the Libyan people, and our job is not finished yet.

It is all about helping the Libyan people and the wonderful society there, the women out there, the children out there. Besides doing our part to ensure a new government, we have also acted swiftly to support those affected by the violence in Libya.

I would like to let the hon. member know what Canada has done there to date. Canada's total humanitarian response to the crisis in Libya is over \$10 million. Canada is helping to address urgent medical requirements, basic humanitarian needs and the repatriation

of those people who are displaced into neighbouring countries and who need our help urgently.

We are working toward that, and I would—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as must be clear by now to all members, the Green Party will be voting against this motion again today. As we stood alone to do so in June, I am pleased to know I will no longer be standing alone and that members of the official opposition will joining me.

My concern, to the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells, is that yes, we are protecting women, but on the other hand, how do we stand as a country when we know that a Libyan woman whose surname was Gadhafi was shot by the Libyan rebels while she tried to get her family out of the country? Babies were killed. The only mistake they acknowledged was that they thought she was a Gadhafi family member.

Is it now acceptable for our allies to kill small children if they think they are related to Colonel Gadhafi?

• (1735)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, that is the very same reason we are in Libya: security. That is what is needed there.

If this mission is not extended, how are we going to help? For various reasons, we need to extend the mission so that we can help the Libyan people in Libya.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if the member would like to expand on how the people of Libya are advancing themselves and helping with their own security.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the hon. member know that I am very proud of the work our government is doing.

Our government is proud of the role Canada has played in supporting the Libyan people in their struggle to realize a new Libya. After 42 years of brutal dictatorship and one-man rule in that country, the Libyan people have taken important steps to secure for themselves a brighter future. While the job is not done yet, the Libyan-led efforts to realize their country's potential still continue to advance.

We now expect the new government of Libya to fulfill its commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. That is what I would like to let the hon. member know.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Canada's continued military contribution to the mission in Libya.

Government Orders

I want to add my voice to all the thanks that have gone out in recognition of the great work that has been done by members of the Canadian armed forces regarding the Libya mission. Also, I must give kudos to our diplomats, especially Ambassador Sandra McCardell. She has done a fantastic job in re-establishing our embassy there, getting the mission working on a temporary basis while repairs are being done to the embassy building, and really leading the Canadian charge on the diplomatic end.

As well, I must thank all the humanitarian relief agencies that are at work in Libya providing the resources and services so desperately needed by the people after their civil war, which is still under way as we speak.

Of course I also thank all of the personnel at the Department of National Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the Canadian International Development Agency who provided briefings to us as members of Parliament and specifically to those of us who are members of the national defence committee. They kept us abreast of everything that was happening throughout the summer and into this fall, on how the Canadian military mission was played out and how things were happening from the standpoint of relief. They also ensured there were diplomatic briefings so we would know how the relationship was progressing with the National Transitional Council. I do want to extend my thanks and appreciation on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of my committee for those briefings.

This mission began last March in response to events in Libya that caught most observers by surprise. At the beginning of this year, few people could have accurately predicted that the Libyan people would rise up in protest against decades of oppression under the Gadhafi regime, and equally as few could have foreseen similar uprisings against entrenched dictators that occurred earlier in Tunisia and Egypt.

The Libyan situation illustrates just how unpredictable the global security environment has become. It also illustrates that responsible governments must be ready to respond to events as they unfold. At home and abroad, this government must remain ready to protect its citizens against all threats while also assuming leadership positions by promoting security and justice around the world.

Libya is but the most recent example, demonstrating why maintaining military capabilities and a high level of readiness makes sense. As the minister said earlier, the Libyan population would not have the opportunity it has now without the Canadian armed forces' contribution to ongoing international efforts in Libya. Both the scale of our contribution and the speed at which it was deployed took a tremendous amount of effort and expertise.

The government acted decisively in support of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1973. We deployed CF-18 fighter aircraft to Sicily one day after resolution 1973 passed to join our allies and partners in enforcing the arms embargo and no-fly zone over Libya. Almost three weeks earlier, HMCS *Charlottetown* set sail for the Mediterranean in early March to join allied ships in view of Libya's deteriorating security situation.

In both cases, the men and women of the Canadian armed forces deployed quickly and professionally with very little notice. They

began contributing immediately to what would soon become the NATO-led mission Operation Unified Protector led by Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard, a Canadian general no less. He is someone I am familiar with as he was stationed at 17 Wing and 1 Air Command headquarters in Winnipeg.

This rapid effective response is a testament to the high level of our Canadian armed forces' training, readiness and equipment.

Today, Canada maintains one of the international community's more robust military contributions to the mission. This includes the Royal Canadian Navy's HMCS *Vancouver* together with its embarked Sea King helicopters. Just as HMCS *Charlottetown* did before it was relieved last month, the *Vancouver* is escorting mine-countering and measuring vessels and replenishment ships to ensure that the Libyan waters remain navigable and that humanitarian supplies make it to shore. HMCS *Vancouver* is also patrolling Libyan waters to ensure that illicit persons and material do not enter or leave Libya.

In the skies, the Royal Canadian Air Force is demonstrating leadership through Task Force Libeccio.

● (1740)

Our two CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft are contributing to surveillance and intelligence efforts. To date, our seven CF-18 Hornet jet fighters that have conducted over 800 sorties along with the United Kingdom and France are the most active fighters of any allied or partner air force. Our two C-130 Hercules and one CC-150 Polaris aerial refuelling aircraft are taking part in what one NATO spokesperson has called the greatest air-to-air refuelling effort in the history of modern aerial warfare.

Each of these Canadian armed forces operations is critical. It is clear that along with the contributions of our allies and partners, they have achieved significant progress in wearing down what are now the remnants of the Gadhafi regime's ability to attack civilian Libyans.

These efforts have allowed the National Transitional Council the time and space to establish greater control, which will all but eliminate further attacks by what remains of Gadhafi's forces.

Earlier this fall, the Prime Minister addressed our members of the Canadian armed forces in Trapani, Italy. He said:

... because you held the ring while Libyans fought their own fight with their oppressor, the Libyan people are now free to choose. This is the best of Canada's military tradition. For we are not a country that makes war for gain or for territory. We do not fight for glory, and if we covet honour, it is only a reputation for doing the right thing in a good cause. That is all. And that is enough.

I believe that Canadians can be proud of our country's leadership role from day one in responding to the Libyan crisis. What truly is impressive is that while all of this was going on the Canadian armed forces was carrying out other international operations as well as operations here at home in North America.

In Canada, the Canadian armed forces continued to provide critical search and rescue capabilities, providing life-saving assistance to those in distress anywhere in Canada and at any time. This was demonstrated rather vividly just last month when our military personnel responded quickly and professionally when a civilian airliner tragically crashed near Resolute Bay, Nunavut.

Just over the past few months, our men and women in uniform have assisted our provincial authorities in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and my home province of Manitoba and indeed in my very own riding, in dealing with and preparing for floods and forest fires.

In North America, the Canadian armed forces continues to work with its American counterparts, mainly through NORAD, to defend the skies above the continent.

However, while the Canadian armed forces has been busy at home over the past several months, it was also engaged in a truly massive undertaking in Afghanistan. In July, the Canadian armed forces wound down five years of combat operations in Afghanistan and shifted its focus to the training of Afghan security forces.

The Canadian armed forces is involved in 15 other missions around the world fulfilling a variety of roles in addition to its operations in Afghanistan and Libya.

All of these missions are essential.

● (1745)

[Translation]

We simply cannot afford to interrupt them.

[English]

We simply cannot afford to not do them, just as we cannot afford to leave Libya now, as the minister has stated.

I support Canada's continued military commitment to this NATO mission and to the people of Libya. I call on all members of the House for their continued support in strengthening and sustaining the Canadian armed forces' impressive readiness and capabilities well into the future.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the Conservative member believe that, by focusing on the humanitarian and diplomatic aspects of the situation as we are proposing, it would give the NTC more time, energy and strength to successfully carry out the few remaining battles in towns that are still occupied by pro-Gadhafi forces on the ground and to conduct military operations to quickly free the few remaining towns that are still under the control of pro-Gadhafi forces.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her service to this country as a member of the Canadian Forces and for her experience in the past. I know that she brings a great deal of knowledge to the Standing Committee on National Defence which I get to chair with her. Therefore, I do appreciate the member's input.

As the member knows from the briefings we have received just this past week a large part of the country is still under the control of

the pro-Gadhafi forces. That represents about 15% of the population. I believe that she as well as all members of the House want to see humanitarian aid and the rights of those individuals protected and delivered so that they have the same opportunity the rest of the people of Libya are now enjoying because of the activities taken on by the NATO mission.

By putting in place the no-fly zone, by making sure that the navy is out there protecting the shoreline and ensuring there is no increase in arms availability to the pro-Gadhafi forces, we can bring about peace hopefully in the short term and deliver the aid that is so desperately needed in the entire country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that the Liberal Party was not able to move the subamendment because I have often heard members on the government side talk about the compassionate side and the importance of humanitarian support. The amendment that was talked about by the member for Mount Royal highlighted the aspect that Canada does have a stronger role in that area to play.

Because of the amendment and the position the NDP took on it, we were not allowed to bring forward the subamendment.

At this time, I will take the opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of the Canadian Forces and the work that it has done.

Does the member or the government envision any circumstances wherein the UN or NATO might become disengaged? What role does he see NATO and the UN having in terms of a disengagement with Libya?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, we know that we have to improve the security situation. As the member for Mount Royal stated clearly and eloquently in his speech earlier, the security situation is still very unstable in Libya and there is no ground force in place other than the NTC to defend and bring about law and order on the streets and in homes and communities across Libya.

When it comes to humanitarian aid, Libya has a great deal of wealth. It has a lot of natural resources at its disposal. Canada has already unfrozen \$2.2 billion of assets Libya had in Canada through the Gadhafi regime and has made them available for humanitarian aid efforts.

Ambassador Sandra McCardell is leading the Canadian diplomatic mission and is making sure things do advance so that we do see things like human rights and the rule of law addressed, as well as ensuring that individual freedoms are protected.

We do have a role to play. The motion that is before us today does address—

● (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. There is time for a very short question and response.

The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Government Orders

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague pointed out the services of our men and women in uniform and the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy. This summer I had the privilege of attending the parliamentarians' program in Trenton at the RCAF base along with some colleagues from the New Democratic Party and my own party.

Could my colleague comment on the importance of the Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force in providing security in the area so that the humanitarian aid we have spoken about all day can actually be delivered? I agree with my colleague that this is an important part.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, there is no question when we look at the roles the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy have played that we would not be in the situation that we are today. We would be in a situation wherein Gadhafi forces would still be oppressing people and humanitarian aid would never be delivered. This discussion today would not have been possible without our clearing away all of the mines and making sure there were no obstacles stopping the humanitarian relief agencies from getting into Libya.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

The New Democrats supported the Canadian military mission and its extension in June in order to ensure that civilians were protected from the Gadhafi regime.

Members have heard a bit of my story before. I fled a war-torn country myself. I wanted to see international support go into my homeland but we did not see any of that. When we in the House were able to provide Canadian support with other international forces, I was happy to know that the Libyan people would get some support.

I and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party sincerely thank our military personnel and diplomats for their hard work in accomplishing the job that they did so well in Libya.

The Gadhafi regime was committing many humanitarian violations, including the threat of going door to door and killing people. The regime was using rape as a weapon of war. Through our support for the extension of the mission in June this year, the New Democrats were successful in adding a number of amendments to address the atrocities that were being committed, including rape.

The acknowledgment that rape was being used as a weapon of war in that amended motion was quite groundbreaking. I really commend every member in the House for acknowledging that and for finally recognizing that rape was being used as a weapon of war.

For many years, hundreds of thousands of women have been in this situation in many countries around the globe. They have been suffering in silence. Once again the women are suffering in so many ways. Not only did they witness their towns and villages being torn apart, but their families were torn being apart. Women experienced many violations of their bodies as well. It is important for me to recognize and acknowledge once again members of the House for recognizing that.

It is significant for the House to acknowledge that, but in order to continue to help these women we need to focus our efforts on a civilian mission, one focused on rebuilding, on education and on providing the help that families need.

The conflict is coming to an end. Even the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence mentioned this earlier. Reports that came in today from the Libyan National Transitional Council indicate that its forces have advanced into Sirte, which is one of the regions that the parliamentary secretary was concerned about earlier today. National Transitional Council forces have made significant advances in this region and the Gadhafi regime is being ousted further, as was mentioned earlier.

The trauma that is endured by women, children and all people in a conflict zone outlasts the conflict. Our men and women in uniform suffer post-traumatic stress disorder when they come back home but children especially suffer when they are forced to be in a conflict zone.

I know from personal experience the psychological and physiological effects that war can have on a child. As a young child I was forced to be in a war zone. I was shot at. A child never forgets the sound of guns blazing.

• (1755)

It has been over 25 years since I experienced war but I remember it as vividly as if it were yesterday. I know that the children who are experiencing it today in Libya are experiencing the same or worse than what I experienced. Being shot at and hiding in my mother's little store with my grandfather and my sisters, I know how much it affected me and affected my development.

What we need to be focusing on right now is the development of these children. How we can provide that type of humanitarian relief to the people in Libya? It should be about providing our expertise. We have so much civilian expertise and resources for providing that type of assistance toward the rehabilitation of the people of Libya and, of course, creating that democratic institution and allowing for the country to have its own set of governance.

Experiences like mine illustrate why we need a robust civilian mission in Libya right now. We need to help these families and to help people deal with the psychological and physiological effects of war.

Our position reflects the reality on the ground in Libya today, just as our support for military intervention in February and June reflected the needs at the time. At the time, we needed to extend the military mission, but right now we need to focus on the humanitarian aspects of rebuilding.

Now that the Gadhafi regime has been toppled, the focus for most people in Libya is post-conflict transition. This means things like rebuilding infrastructure, rebuilding and developing the democratic institutions, rebuilding and developing for the people and the health of the communities.

We need to ensure once again that it is Libyan-led reconciliation and reconstruction that happens in that country. It is not for Canada or anybody else anywhere in the world to tell the Libyans how to govern themselves. They need to figure out a self-governance model. It is not for us to dictate to them.

That, unfortunately, was what happened in the past when international forces went into a country to support it and then, somehow, stayed beyond the military intervention to protect the civilians and ended up dictating terms to the local people.

I am pretty sure that many of our colleagues in this House on both sides will agree that is the old kind of politics for global affairs. The new kind of politics is really about creating that Libyan-led initiative, that local-led initiative so that the people of Libya can actually own that government and ensure they are a part of it.

New Democrats really do not support yet another extension of the military mission in Libya. We do believe that it is time for Canada to focus on the humanitarian aspect: to provide our civilian expertise in the country and resources for, once again, humanitarian assistance; help with institution building; the democratic development; and, as I said before, the softer, less tangible aspects of war. We have so much expertise and so many people who have the expertise to provide the assistance in helping the people rebuild the country. Canada's focus today should be on helping the people who are now effectively in a post-conflict zone, rather than furthering the military mission.

• (1800)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for her intervention and I appreciate her own personal experience in coming from a war-torn country and finding refuge here in Canada.

I am somewhat surprised that she is advocating that we forget about the people in central Libya where they are still under the oppression of pro-Gadhafi forces and not wanting to help those women, children and others who are experiencing all the horrific actions of this regime, including using rape as a weapon.

I wonder why the NDP wants to cut and run, rather than ensuring that we provide the opportunity for all people of Libya to have the same opportunity in receiving relief and assistance and having their freedoms and rights respected.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, my understanding from the news that is coming in from the Libyan National Transitional Council is that the transitional government forces have already taken over the remnants of the Gadhafi forces in Sirte. The expectation that I heard from our foreign affairs critic and defence critic was that it would be days, not months, before they are fully rid of all of the Gadhafi forces.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to do a bit of a follow-up on that question.

I think countries around the world and Canadians themselves recognize that Canada has played a critical role in the freedom that many Libyans have today as a result of our direct involvement. Ultimately, we want to do more than just offer our Canadian Forces. We also want to be able to provide humanitarian support and so forth.

Government Orders

I have a concern and I am a bit surprised in terms of the NDP positioning on it. Does she not believe that there is some danger of pulling out our forces when there could be further human tragedies as a direct result? Our forces have put a phenomenal effort into doing such a wonderful job on behalf of our country. Does she not see that there is an element of danger that we would be putting people into if, in fact, we were to follow the amendment that is being suggested by the NDP?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, my understanding about going into a country to assist it militarily with the hope that the country will establish itself is the reason that we are in that country right now, which is to assist it during the military phase. I may be a little off but my understanding is that we want to help the Libyan forces develop and they would be the ones providing the real services to the Libyans. Our forces and our experts, I am sure, would be there to provide the support and the resources for the Libyan forces. However, our role should be to help them help themselves rather than dictate in their own country.

• (1805)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem intent on playing with their guns. Once we get past this playing with guns, we need to start talking about what is really on the ground that we can do in terms of facilitating humanitarian aid in Libya.

Through my colleague's own experience in Sri Lanka, what needs to be done to help people transition into a full-fledged democracy with a working economy? What would my colleague say are the specific measures that would help with humanitarian aid?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas for his question that goes to my heart because of my own personal stories.

Unfortunately, in my home country, the war had been going on for more than 30 years. Now, the country has been in a post-conflict zone for over two years. However, because there has not been that international support, the people are still suffering and there are still humanitarian violations going on in that country. We could use support from the international community on such things as building homes again, helping people rebuild their livelihoods and providing that psychological and physiological support for people, those are some of the things. However, establishing a democratic system that would allow for self-governance is the best and most important method.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I call on the member for Timmins—James Bay I will point out, pursuant to an order made earlier, that we have until 15 minutes after the hour. I will have to interrupt him toward the end of that time.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you can interrupt me any time because I have immense respect for your judgment. Therefore, I will respect your judgment in terms of the clock.

Government Orders

This past June, the Canadian Parliament agreed on something very important which was UN resolution 1973. It talked about the need to bring, with our allies, an international human rights response to the murderous Gadhafi regime that was attacking its people and the threat of rape being used as a weapon of war. That was raised in the House by the New Democratic Party and we put it into our motion of support. It is the first time that rape, as a weapon of war, has been recognized in a parliamentary debate. So we did something very profound.

However, at the time, there were a number of people in Canada, certainly within our party, who were very concerned that this would be misinterpreted as a mandate for regime change. There is a fundamental difference between that and the international community coming together to protect civilians and the civilian enclaves. To see this as a mandate to begin regime change, certainly we would see the necessity then for a regime change in many countries. Regarding the murderous regime in Syria, there is not a comment from the government.

Now that the regime has fallen, there is a need for the international community to begin the important work of rebuilding, but we hear from the government continual talk of punching above our weight and militaristic talk. I heard my colleague for Selkirk—Interlake use the old tired Conservative slogan: “We don’t cut and run”. Now my colleague is from farm country and probably does not know what “cut and run” means.

Cut and run is a nautical term. It means if one’s ship is going to the hit rocks, one has to cut the anchor and run with the wind, otherwise the ship goes straight into the rocks. We do not hear that kind of nuance from the Conservatives because their plan is always to go straight into the rocks.

I speak on this because I was raised by my grandmother who has never gotten over the horror of the Battle of the Somme and the fact that every boy on her street died fighting for the British army in Somme. She said to me again and again as a little boy, “Charlie, always watch the politicians who get young boys killed”.

There is a sort of puffery in the way we talk about our allies. I think of the great Prime Minister Cameron who came here and spoke of the international community standing up against the murderous regime in Libya. Yet, just last year it was the British regime that was courting Gadhafi and signing deals. In fact, I was just reading an article in *The Telegraph* about how Britain courted, armed and trained a Libyan monster. As recently as June 16, 2010, it was providing Gadhafi’s notorious son Khamis with special invitations to celebrate the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. While the British were engaging Gadhafi and treating him royally, they were also signing arms deals so that he could oppress and kill his own people.

That is the reality of international affairs. We must start being more honest in the House of Commons when we talk about our role in the international community with our allies in terms of dealing with murderous regimes like Gadhafi. Now that Gadhafi has been beaten and the people have risen up, we see the governments of the United States, England and the Conservative Government of Canada saying that it is an example of how we always stand with our allies.

In fact, year after year they promoted Gadhafi and gave him the arms to oppress his people.

Now I do not have anything against Mr. Cameron coming into this House and pretending that he has always been against murderous regimes like Gadhafi when that was not the case. However, I have a problem with the House seemingly obsessed, and the Liberal Party’s interventionist approach along with the Conservatives, by us in raising the issue of the need to move away from a military mission at this point and use Canada’s extraordinary expertise to rebuild, bring in international development and international justice. We have been leaders on this. This is where we need to move now.

Somehow for the member for Toronto Centre, who has taken on the mantle formerly held by Mr. Ignatieff, and the Conservatives, this is a sign that we are cutting and running. It is somehow a slight to our brave men and women in uniform. I must say that I always find it deeply odious that the Conservatives always have to say that they are the only ones who care for our men and women in uniform. Our men and women in uniform go to do a specific job.

● (1810)

The regime has fallen. We were not signed on in UN resolution 1973 for a regime change. Anywhere does it say that our job was there for a regime change. This was a fight between the Libyan people, and our job as the international community was to go in and ensure that Gadhafi’s thugs, who at that time of course were well armed by the British military, were not killing innocent civilians.

That phase has ended. That obligation to that mission has ended. The question is, where do we go as a Parliament?

It is incumbent for Canada to stand up and show that it stands for something more than just this sort of attempt to recreate the old cold war militarism, that Canada has been an international peacemaker, that Canada had an international reputation before this government came along, and in Libya today, we have the opportunity to be the good community, to be the good international citizen.

I call on this Parliament to take that step, to say that this fight in Libya has now moved to a new place, and we need a country that is willing to step up. We will not be seeing that. That is why we are hearing the heckling from the Conservative backbenches. These are the same guys who called Jack Layton Taliban Jack when Jack spoke six, seven years ago about the fundamental failure of the Conservative policy in Afghanistan. Now we see that with its failed policy, the United States is now trying to deal with the negotiations.

War is not a simple thing. People are hurt. People are killed. We are at the point now in this conflict where we need the international community to change gears, because if we try to misrepresent UN resolution 1973 and say that this was all a covert plan for regime change, then it sets a very dangerous international precedent. It sets the precedent that the United States set for Iraq and we saw the disastrous consequences there.

Our country's foreign policy is not about taking out any dictator any time we want. That does not meet the test of the rule of law. What we agreed to in the House was to protect the civilian population that was under the threat of the Gadhafi regime. That threat is now ended. This is the final mop-up. We have to move on as a Parliament. This is why the New Democrats are moving forward our amendment to move us toward the humanitarian phase and the rebuilding phase of this situation.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Friday, September 23, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question to dispose of motion No. 5 under Government Business.

● (1815)

The Acting Speaker: The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1845)

[English]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 30)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brossseau
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Donnelly
Dubé
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)

Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Caron
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dussault
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)

Hassainia
Hyer
Julian
Lapointe
Laverdière
Leslie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Nuncz-Melo
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Ravignat
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scllah
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Thibeault
Tremblay

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chisu
Clarke
Coderre
Cuzner
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Foote
Fry
Gallant
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoepfner
Ilsu
Jean
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Lake
Lauson
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leitch
Leung
Lobb

Government Orders

Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Marston
Masse
May
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Rafferty
Raynault
Saganash
Savoie
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffler
Toone
Turmel — 98

NAYS

Members

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Batoman
Bellavance
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Casey
Chong
Clement
Cotler
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fast
Fletcher
Fortin
Galipeau
Garneau
Glover
Goodale
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Lebel
Lee
Lemieux
Lizon
Lunney

Government Orders

MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Opitz	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Plamondon
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Seebach
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Trudeau
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 188

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[Translation]

The next question is on the main motion.

The hon. Minister of State and Chief Government Whip on a point of order.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, NDP members will be voting no.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, Liberal members will be voting in favour of this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, we support the motion.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party votes no.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, did the other members of the Bloc Québécois vote for or against this motion? We heard only one member vote.

[English]

The Speaker: I believe he has indicated that all members of the Bloc voted that way.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 31)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Bateman
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Cotler
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Fletcher
Foote	Fortin
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Hsu	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauson	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda

Opitz
Paradis
Penashue
Poitievre
Raiitt
Rathgeber
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Sgro
Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Smith
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trotter
Truppe
Uppal
Valeriot
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Pacetti
Payne
Plamondon
Preston
Rajotte
Regan
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Scarpaleggia
Seebach
Shea
Shory
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Trudeau
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 188

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Donnelly
Dubé
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hyer
Julian
Lapointe
Laverdière
Leslie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Patry
Perrault
Quach
Ravignat
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart

Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Caron
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duscault
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Grogubé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Marston
Masse
May
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Rafferty
Raynault
Saganash
Savoie
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer

Adjournment Proceedings

Thibeault
Tremblay

Toone
Turmel — 98

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1850)

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the adjournment proceedings to follow up on a question that I asked in the House on June 6 of this year, submitted in the usual way.

The notice stated that I was not satisfied with the answer received, in this case, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence, concerning my question about the government being forthcoming, first, on its plans to continue the mission in Afghanistan and the fact that throughout 2009 and most of 2010 up until November, the Prime Minister had repeatedly told Canadians that our forces would leave Afghanistan at the end of July 2011 in accordance with the motion of the House.

This was repeated again and again over the course of time. In fact, I remember one time the Prime Minister saying that maybe there would be a couple of soldiers guarding the embassy in Kabul, the embassy where the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence once resided.

This was the notion and the comfort Canadians had from the Prime Minister that this would happen.

We know what happened in the fall of 2010. Without even a vote in the House, there was a unilateral decision by the government to continue the mission in Afghanistan. It was stated that it was a non-combat mission that would all happen behind the wire. In fact, on November 16, the Prime Minister said in the House, in answer to questions, that the answer was yes to all those questions, as the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and others had said, that the government was looking at a non-combat mission. It would be a training mission that will occur in classrooms behind the wire on bases.

By suggesting this was a non-combat mission, the Prime Minister said that there did not have to be a vote in Parliament.

We had a vote just now about the continuation of a mission, and that was part of the promises that the government gave to Canadians when they ran for election and part of the commitments that were made that whenever a Canadian Forces mission was in operation there would be a vote in Parliament. For the most part, the government has respected that.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, it is about whether Canadians are being given the whole truth. We have another example of it now. After hearing about this behind-the-wire story, which was told to the Canadian public by the Minister of National Defence and by the Prime Minister, we learned the other day in the defence committee that we had a dozen places in Kabul where training was going on, involving transportation all over the place. We are not behind the wire. In fact, Canadian Forces were engaged in combat when the attack took place on the U.S. embassy.

There are Canadian forces there. They are exposed to significant risks. We were told this was supposed to be behind the wire in classrooms. In fact, Canadian forces, up to a maximum of 950, for three years are going to be engaged in this combat training mission in Afghanistan, exposed to risks.

Canadians are not being told the whole truth. That is the point of my question. I was not satisfied with the answer I received because we were not given the full facts.

• (1855)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend, the member for St. John's East knows, because we have been briefed on this subject as recently as last week, there is a training mission under way in Afghanistan. Our government has been clear about its intentions in this regard from the beginning. The combat mission is over.

I am very grateful to have this opportunity to set the record straight regarding the government's intentions for what remains an evolving mission in Afghanistan.

Let me begin by reiterating that the core of the question put by the member opposite is based on leaked information and it is not government policy to comment on such speculative matters.

However, I can say this. In accordance with the parliamentary motion passed in 2008, the Canadian Forces' combat mission in Kandahar ended in July 2011. The government was very clear and consistent about this. The Canadian Forces carried out their last major combat operation in a rural area of Kandahar in June.

In July there was a handover to a mission transition task force, whose mandate is to ensure that our withdrawal from Kandahar province by the year's end is conducted effectively, while maintaining accountability for our equipment, material and personnel. This will allow the Canadian Forces to meet the government's commitment to redeploy fully from Kandahar by December 31, 2011.

[Translation]

Furthermore, a contingent of Canadian Forces members will remain in Kandahar until November 2011 to fulfill their commitment regarding NATO support positions and staff positions. This situation and this Canadian presence in Kandahar were explained clearly during the last committee meeting.

The Canadian Forces completed a smooth transfer of their area of responsibility to other coalition forces in the Kandahar area, and our partners will continue to build on our successes in order to help the Afghan government ensure that country's safety and stability.

[English]

This has been a collaborative and integrated approach every step of the way. It is only because of the seamlessness that we have been complimented by allies, including the United States, for ensuring a smooth transition under difficult and challenging circumstances.

Although the Canadian Forces' combat mission in Afghanistan has drawn to a close, our commitment to Afghanistan remains long term. We will maintain a whole of government presence in the country, through our governance, development and military training work, until March 2014.

We are there at the request of the Government of Afghanistan, working alongside many NATO international partners. We are also committed to supporting Afghanistan, above all, building up security and governance institutions required to bring peace and prosperity to its people. Training the Afghan National Security Forces has been an integral component of our mission to date and Canada's military trainers are recognized as among the best in the world. That is why, in November 2010, the government announced that forces would continue to support Afghan National Security Forces' training through a contribution of up to 950 personnel in both training and support positions within the NATO training mission in Afghanistan.

This mission, centred on Kabul, at several locations in Kabul, as the member opposite noted correctly, because the Afghan national army and police are being trained at several locations. We will also include smaller training locations in Mazar-e-Sharif in the north and Herat in the west. It will focus on training and mentoring the members of these institutions in an institutional setting. Well-led, well-trained, well-equipped Afghan National Security Forces will enable the Government of Afghanistan to assume increasing responsibility for Afghan security.

I must reiterate for the benefit of this House that the attack reported to have involved Canadian Forces last week was a serious attack for Kabul but if and when Canadian Forces respond to an attack, they will be acting in self-defence. That is an entirely different context to the combat mission that we had under way earlier this year and in previous years.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, of course it is no secret. The Minister of National Defence acknowledged that combat in this House on Friday.

The idea that the government has been clear, which is what the member said just now, is exactly what the Prime Minister said in 2010. In January and June, he said that the government could not have been more clear that the military mission would end and all of our soldiers would be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2011.

That is the kind of language that the Conservatives use when they try to assure Canadians that they are being perfectly clear. Every time the Prime Minister or the government says that they are being clear we need to watch out because sometime down the road we will find out that the exact opposite might happen.

That is the point of this question. We were given assurances as far back as 2003 that the primary objective of our mission in Afghanistan was to provide training and that it was expected that the Afghan national army would take over all operations in 2005. Here we are in 2011 and the government wants us there until 2014.

● (1900)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the government has been clear and consistent. The combat mission is over and a training mission is under way.

It is no surprise that a training mission continues. It has been in existence for several years under NATO auspices. Canada has joined, on a large scale, a mission that we are scaling up at the time we re-committed to Afghanistan with a focus on training. It has never been anything but a widely recognized reality that Afghan National Security Forces, to meet the scale of the challenge they continue to face, need equality on a level that the Canadian Forces, with its experience in Afghanistan, are ideally suited to provide.

We are proud of this mission. We have never hidden any of its aspects. We will continue to inform this House and our committee of its progress.

The only issue that is not clear to this House is whether Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, in the face of the NDP, has any commitment left to Afghanistan whatsoever, because whatever we commit to do seems to come under question and seems to be called into doubt by the member opposite at every opportunity.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this point in our adjournment procedures to pursue a question that I initially asked the hon. Minister of the Environment on Wednesday of last week, September 21.

The issue of ozone monitoring and threatened cuts to key scientists who perform these functions was also raised by the Liberal environment critic and by the environment critic of the official opposition. I am pleased to see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment here this evening for pursuing this matter.

It is complicated. What we have been able to determine relates to a number of very key senior scientists for whom it would not be possible to imagine an easy replacement, scientists who have decades of expertise in working at monitoring ozone, which at the stratospheric level protects all life on earth from ultraviolet radiation. Without the ozone layer, there would be no life on earth, and we are very fortunate that Canadian government leadership led to the Montreal Protocol to protect the ozone layer back in 1987.

Since that time, Canada has always been respected globally as a country that has really taken the lead, done the good science and been prepared, as with all countries. It was a great success story that the Montreal Protocol has resulted in countries around the world reducing and phasing out their reliance on chlorofluorocarbons and other chemicals that destroy the ozone layer.

It was a great shock to discover through the media and elsewhere that a number of key scientists had received a letter to suggest that their positions with Environment Canada were in doubt. They

received a letter saying that they could be affected by changes in work assignments, and that this was, as the Minister of the Environment explained to me privately, pursuant to directives that are required by Treasury Board in the workforce adjustment directive.

I will just explain the position of these key scientists. One is the manager for the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre. It is absolutely essential, and there is only one manager. That person has received a letter and may be laid off.

There is also a person who is responsible for the ozonesonde program, which allows weather balloons to be let go once a week in 17 locations across Canada, maintaining a very good record of ozone level measurements, which, by the way, tell us about tropospheric ozone as well. Ironically, while stratospheric ozone protects all life on earth, ground level ozone is a pollutant, and in fact measuring ground level ozone is a good way of maintaining monitoring of oil sands operations in the region. I will get back to that point as well.

The other person who has been threatened is the person who does the scientific assessments.

My question is for the parliamentary secretary.

As I look at what we have heard so far, the Minister of the Environment said in the House, "We are not cutting any ozone monitoring services". In contradistinction to that, the Environment Canada assistant deputy minister, Madam Dodds, has said to the media, "We don't really need the same level of ozone monitoring".

I would like some guidance from the parliamentary secretary. It seems that certainly within the scientific community there are deep concerns that we will lose key capacity to protect the ozone layer and monitor what is happening with its protection, and at the same time lose the ability to monitor pollutants at ground level.

Who was correct? Was it the Minister of the Environment in the House, or was it the assistant deputy minister when she suggested that these key services could be lost?

● (1905)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to have the opportunity to address my colleague for the first time in the House on this lovely fall evening. Let me reiterate what the Minister of the Environment has repeatedly told the House.

Environment Canada will continue to measure ozone. Our plan is to ensure Canada's strong track record of atmospheric ozone measurement continues to deliver sound science within budget. We acknowledge that Canada is a world leader in atmospheric ozone science and has been for 50 years. Many of the measurement methods used globally were pioneered by Canadians. In fact, Canada also holds the longest record of ozone observations in the Arctic in the world at Resolute Bay where regular ozone measurements have been carried out since 1966.

Adjournment Proceedings

At present, Environment Canada uses two different methods to measure ozone, the Brewer network, and as the member opposite has mentioned, the ozonesonde network. However, as the member opposite is well aware, technologies and methods of measurement change and improve over time. Our plan, rather than what the member opposite has suggested, is to optimize and integrate these two networks. This will include a review of existing network sites in terms of their scientific validity in order for Canada to fully meet its requirements for surveillance of ozone holes and the chemical composition of the atmosphere.

Canada shares its ozone network data internationally via the World Meteorological Organization, the WMO, and for many years has maintained the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre. The WMO supplies the data to other weather centres and agencies in Europe and in the U.S.

Environment Canada is not closing the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre, which we have successfully hosted for many years. Environment Canada will have staff dedicated to both of these activities and will continue to achieve quality results.

I repeat, Environment Canada will continue to measure ozone in the upper atmosphere. We will not close the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, like my friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, I also enjoy being able to engage in an exchange with her in the House this evening, but I am afraid her answer does not quite deal with the key issue.

We now know that the ADM for Environment Canada has said that we will reduce ozone monitoring. The Brewer network system and the ozonesonde system measure different things. We categorically need both. The Brewer system measures only in daylight, so it is useless in the Arctic during the winter when it is dark. The ozonesonde network measures ozone at all levels of the atmosphere in both daylight and darkness. We cannot afford to lose either. There is no way to streamline or optimize or pretend there is new technology. Both systems must be maintained, and that is still in doubt because the manager for the ozonesonde system has received this notice.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, to be perfectly clear, Canada's environment remains a strong priority for our government, even in times of fiscal restraint. Environment Canada will continue to measure ozone and maintain its strong track record in this area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

SEP 27 2011

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(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA ACT

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-288, An Act respecting the National Flag of Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly introduce my bill entitled, “National Flag of Canada Act”. The purpose of this enactment is to ensure that all Canadians from coast to coast to coast have the right to fly the national flag of Canada.

It is in the national and public interest that all Canadians have the right and privilege to display the national flag of Canada and that no Canadian shall be restricted from displaying our flag. The Canadian flag represents all Canadian citizens. It represents pride in our great nation and support for those who have sacrificed their lives for the principles that it embodies: freedom, democracy, courage, and justice, upon which our great nation was built.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to introduce to the House a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from right across the country who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. They point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined and yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world, spending millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for any asbestos workers who may be affected and economic development opportu-

nities for the communities in which they live. They also call upon the government to end all subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad. They also plea that Parliament stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a group of citizens in my riding who have presented a petition to me calling upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically engineered alfalfa and to do a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by people from all over Ontario objecting to a mega quarry in Melancthon township in Dufferin county in Ontario. There are a number of provisos, which I will not read, but there is one that I will.

It says that the proposed mega quarry would threaten the headwaters of the Nottawasaga, Grand and Saugeen watershed systems and the Mad, Noisy, Pine and Boyne Rivers sub-watersheds, consequently, detrimentally and permanently affecting the aquifers in the area of the proposed mega quarry. All of these rivers, of course, will end up in the Great Lakes.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to conduct an environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT**

BILL C-10—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, not more than two further sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government orders on the second day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

● (1010)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1 there will now be a 30 minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

Given the amount of interest, I will ask members to keep their questions or comments to about a minute. I will ask the minister to keep his replies to about a minute.

Also, as this is an opportunity for members to question the government, preference will be given to members of the opposition parties, but we will ensure that, if interested, some government members will have the opportunity as well.

I recognize the hon. member for Outremont.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the start of this first full session of the 41st Parliament, the government has not stopped harping about how its real priorities are the economy and employment. It is now the second week, and we have seen none of that. Instead, we have yet another example of its contempt for our parliamentary institutions, since it is prepared to use the guillotine to stop debate at second reading.

My first question for the government is the following: will it use other techniques to restrict debate when the parliamentary committee is examining the bill? Will we finally be able to take time to hear from experts and witnesses on the cost, particularly transfers to the provinces?

[English]

This is an exceptional situation where, at the beginning of a Parliament, in only the second week, the government is already using the guillotine to stop parliamentary debate.

At other stages of the bill, will the government be using closure, time allocation or other methods to restrain debate, notably in committee?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat confused

by one of the statements by the hon. member. He said that we will finally get a chance to hear witnesses.

All components of the bill have been tabled before Parliament and, as of right now, we have heard 295 witnesses, 58 committee days have taken up by this and 123 hours of the justice committee. I hope that is one of the things we can all agree on. We always look for things to agree on but the bill has been thoroughly looked at, debated and has been before the public.

I hope the hon. member will rise and say that it certainly has been and that we want to get this. He says that he wants to get back to talking about the economy, which is great. However, let us get this justice bill moving and then we can get back to talking about the economy. I agree with that as well.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we were expecting to hear. We knew that the government's intention was to restrict proper analysis in parliamentary committee, and the minister has just confirmed that for us.

Not only is the government using the guillotine in second reading, we will be getting the same treatment in committee and then the same treatment at report stage. It will try to ram this through.

We do not know how much this would cost the provinces. This would be a massive transfer of expenses to the provinces. The Conservatives have used very restrictive rules for employment insurance, and as people's employment insurance has run out, they go on the welfare rolls, which is the responsibility of the provinces.

Here is another massive transfer. Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, told us today about another decrease in transfers to the provinces, something the Conservatives swore they would never do so they would not be like the Liberals. Not only are they worse than the Liberals in terms of transfers to the provinces, they do not respect the basic parliamentary right to debate bills and to know the real costs.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I am not the one who should have to bring the hon. member up to date on this, but the transfers to the provinces have increased. I checked it out with the Minister of Finance. It is over \$2.4 billion more than the last fiscal analysis the year before. I know that should make him happy. Maybe he did not know that before but I want him to know that is the case.

The bill has been thoroughly analyzed. It has been before the committee. We responded to those questions. There have been hundreds of witnesses.

Everybody needs to get to work. We are trying to crack down on violent crime in this country. We should all join together. We should all be against crime. We need to take steps and this is a step in the right direction.

Government Orders

● (1015)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. Of course we are all against violent crime. I have not met anybody in the House who is in favour of violent crime. That is not what the debate is all about and the minister knows that. He is an intelligent person and knows perfectly well that is not what the discussion is about.

The debate is about whether these measures will actually have the effect that the government says they will have. Does he not appreciate and understand the impact that these measures put all together would have on the administration of justice?

The bill would not only have a dramatic effect on the size of our prisons and the prison population but it would also have a significant impact with respect to the administration of the courts. It would have a huge impact on how crown attorneys do their job. It would have an enormous effect on whether plea bargaining could ever take place. It would jam up the courts and cost the provinces and the country billions of dollars. It would not add to the security of Canadians with respect to criminal activity. That has to do with a crime prevention agenda to deal with the root causes of crime.

The minister is simply carrying us down a road that has been tried in the American states and has been abandoned by most of the American states that have tried it. It has been criticized by people from all sides of the political spectrum, from the right, left and centre, and from anybody looking at this in a rational way.

Why is the government persisting in taking this country down a path in which wherever it has been tried has been eventually rejected by the people and governments of those places because they have found that it simply does not work?

The government is dumb on crime and it would have a terrible effect—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Since quite a few people stood, I would ask that interventions be kept to one minute.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, only the Liberals would take that position. Actually, I should not say that as they would be cheered on by the NDP in most of these cases. What they are saying is that by leaving these violent criminals out on the street that somehow we are all better off.

The bill is very specific. The hon. member was not correct when he talked to the press outside after the bill was introduced by saying that we would be going after people who are possessing marijuana plants or something like that. The bill is not about that. It would go after the people who are in the business of trafficking, the people who sell drugs around schools, the organized crime that brings drugs into the country. We are saying that those individuals should be taken off the street.

There are a lot of ordinary law-abiding Canadians and victims right across this country who are applauding this. The hon. member and his party, and all those who are cheering him on, are completely offside with Canadian interests on this issue.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I remember in committee when the minister could not answer whether

he had any evidence that mandatory minimums on drug crimes worked. He could not offer any evidence. Not only that, the Conservatives cannot even offer a true accounting of the cost of the bill and yet they are prepared to ram it through and stifle debate in the House of Commons.

Now that the minister has had an election and some time to think, does he actually have any evidence about the true cost of these bills that are contained in the omnibus bill? Does he have any evidence that the bill would actually act as a deterrent in terms of drug crimes? He could not offer any before and I suspect that he has none now.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate this new concern from the opposition members about cost. In one sense, it is refreshing. However, they have it wrong if this is the area in which they want to save money.

With respect to the cost of these, I would refer the member to the hundreds of pages that the Minister of Public Safety and I tabled before the committee. I can tell her that it will provide her and her colleagues with many happy hours of reading looking at the costs of crime.

As I have said before, the vast majority of the cost of crime is borne by the victims. That would have been missed because I do not think we have ever heard that coming from the opposition. It is the victims who pay the cost. They are the ones we side with. They are the ones we stand up for.

I wish that after all the analysis, all the time that these bills have been before Parliament, they would stand up to say, yes, they stand with victims and law-abiding Canadians as well.

● (1020)

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the minister talk about all the debate and discussion that has taken place on this bill. Obviously, what has not taken place is the Conservatives have not listened to Canadians when they have talked about the impact Bill C-10 would have on Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The Canadian Bar Association has said there is a real problem with Bill C-10. It has concerns about the mandatory minimum sentences and overreliance on incarceration, constraints on judges' discretion to ensure a fair result in each case, and the bill's impact on specific, already disadvantaged groups.

Yet the minister stands and says that we have had enough debate and enough discussion.

The government is closing debate on the bill at a time when Canadians know full well what is needed. They know what the risks to their safety are. They know that more is needed in terms of prevention.

The minister should start listening to the experts, like those at the Canadian Bar Association.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I have listened to a lot of experts in this area, and oftentimes they are the victims of crimes. We do listen to them.

Government Orders

The hon. member mentioned that we are not listening. I will tell her to whom we are listening. In the last election we made it very clear that this will continue to be a priority for us, that we will reintroduce these bills, and that we will take a stand against violent criminals and those who would sexually exploit children. We were very clear on that.

I have to tell the House how pleased, proud and grateful, quite frankly, I am to the people of this country. They have come forward and given us a stronger mandate in each of the last four elections.

The hon. member might want to start listening to that, because every time the Liberals keep championing their soft on crime approach, they keep going down. They might want to listen to ordinary law-abiding Canadians and victims in this country. It might help them.

[Translation]

Ms. Francoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to remind the minister that it is 39% of the population. If that is the government's idea of a strong mandate to shove things down our throats, then I think that is a little rich.

I am against the fact that I am being denied my democratic right to express myself with all the time that is normally allotted. This is not the 40th Parliament; it is the 41st Parliament. The 295 witnesses and 88 committee days show how important this bill is. It is not an individual bill; we are talking about an omnibus bill. When a criminal court—and the Minister of Justice claims to be well versed in criminal law—declares or orders a new trial, it is back to square one. A new Parliament is not unlike a new trial. All the information from the previous trial does not carry over; the process starts all over again. Democracy has spoken, as it has the right to do.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, we have had each of these bills before Parliament. As I pointed out, there have been 223 speeches, many hours of debate, and there will be a couple more days of debate. There will be investigation and discussion and witnesses before committee. There is third reading stage as well.

If the hon. member and her colleagues did not get an opportunity to express their thoughts a dozen or so times when these bills were before Parliament, I would suggest they participate in the debate in the next couple of days.

We have been listening to the NDP. The NDP suggested that we bring these bills together to better debate them, and that is exactly what we have done. They were separate in the previous Parliament. I remember when we put them together, members objected to their being together, so we separated them. Now we have separated them, and they want them back together. That is what we have done. We have responded to what that individual's party wanted in December of last year. We have put the bills all together. Here is an opportunity for the member to make her opinion known, and that is all I would suggest to her.

The member should look at who the bill targets. It targets violent criminals, those who would sexually molest children, people who are in the child pornography business. There are other good parts of it.

When the member has a chance to go over those hundreds of pages of transcript, the testimony of those hundreds of witnesses, she will agree that these are important steps in the right direction.

• (1025)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just to correct the hon. minister, only 39% of Canadians voted for the Conservatives, which means that 61% of Canadians did not vote for the Conservative government.

This chamber is supposed to be the place where democracy plays itself out. This is where we have the chance to fully debate these issues.

There are major issues with the omnibus bill. If the minister has confidence in his legislation, why is he closing down the debate in Parliament, which is where debate is supposed to happen, and denying many of us the opportunity to voice our concerns and our constituents' concerns?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, again, I am very aware and very appreciative of the mandate Canadians have given us.

I remember there were not too many observers in the media or pollsters who predicted we would get a majority government, but we could feel it. When I was talking with people and visiting ridings outside of my wonderful riding of Niagara Falls, I was getting such positive feedback from people that I was confident all the way along that Canadians would give us that mandate.

I have to say to the hon. member that in going across this country and talking about the justice agenda of the Conservative government, it has been well received. I can only say how pleased and grateful I am that in each of the last four elections where we have made this a priority, our number of seats has been going up. I am very grateful to the people of this country for that.

The hon. member knows that the bill has been extensively debated and perused. We have taken one of the suggestions from the NDP of putting the bills together in a comprehensive bill. We are responding in that sense.

The hon. member should have a look at who this bill targets. Ultimately the opposition members should support us. If they still do not agree, they should talk to their constituents about how they feel about the components of this bill. I think the member will find that they support us as well.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 2008 there was a Department of Justice study which said that the cost of crime in Canada in that one year alone was near \$100 billion, most of which was borne by victims.

I would ask the Minister of Justice to share his views on the cost of crime in Canada and how this comprehensive legislation is going to deal with that.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my parliamentary secretary for all her work and the support she gives us in this area.

The Department of Justice pointed out that the cost of crime in this country was about \$99 billion. What is particularly arresting is the fact that 83% of that is borne by victims in this country. They are the ones who ultimately pay the price.

I do not get too many questions about victims in the House of Commons. It is not just the financial cost; it is the emotional cost. I remember when we introduced the bill to get rid of the faint hope clause, a reporter asked me if it was going to stop people from committing first degree murder. I said that what it would do is reduce victimization in this country, because those individuals who worried about the criminal getting out on the faint hope clause would not have to worry about that anymore.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have one point on the position the NDP has taken, particularly through my office, on omnibus crime bills.

This is not the kind of omnibus crime bill we have talked about at all. If the government is going to do an omnibus crime bill, if it is going to have meaningful reform to our Criminal Code, it has to be done on a thematic basis. The government has to look at one whole area of the code and decide on the amendments that need to be made. Then they need to be compiled.

What the government has done is brought together a mish-mash of various legislation. There are sections of the immigration act that are being amended. There are amendments to the corrections act, the Criminal Code and the drug enforcement legislation. That is not the way to draft omnibus legislation if the government is really serious about good public policy.

I want to go back to the point the minister keeps raising about victims and about the fact that he has all this great support in the country. The reality is that not once during the election campaign did the Conservatives talk about the cost. Not once did they say to the victims or the taxpayers that it is going to cost *x* billions of dollars.

In fact, the government hid those figures from us. It was only as a result of a contempt motion that part of that was released. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, he only received about 40% of the material he needed to be able to do an accurate assessment so that the Canadian people and the House would know how much this was going to cost.

When will the minister be coming before the House to give us realistic figures as opposed to shutting down debate?

• (1030)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, as I pointed out in response to a previous question, we tabled hundreds of pages with respect to the costs of crime. However, if we are all very frank and honest, for those who oppose cracking down on violent criminals, spending a dollar on it is too much for those who are opposed to what we are trying to do.

We are on track. I completely disagree that we did not raise this. I know I personally raised this matter. I see the hon. member from Brantford, who will confirm that during the election I talked about the cost to victims all the time. I said that they bear most of the costs. Financially and emotionally the costs are borne by the victims in this country.

Government Orders

My parliamentary secretary just asked a question with respect to the costs. I would point out that 83% of the costs, according to the Department of Justice in 2008, was borne by the victims. I have never hidden that statistic. I am glad to repeat it over and over because we know who pays the cost of crime in this country.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister has said that the government has a mandate with regard to the Safe Streets and Communities Act. All governments have a mandate for safe streets and communities. All governments are given a mandate to protect the security of their citizens. We had a mandate for that as well. The question is how one implements that mandate and the nature of the legislation that is put forward.

This legislation that has been put forward comes at a time when, even before the legislation was tabled, there is overcrowding in Canadian prisons, to the point that in British Columbia as an example, there is some 200% overcrowding in the prisons. In the United States overcrowding led to a constitutional challenge with respect to cruel and unusual punishment. The courts ordered the release of inmates.

The legislation has not been costed so it will cost mega-billions for the building of megaprisons. Regrettably, at the end of the day we will get more crime and less justice with spiralling costs.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, with respect to the mandate, yes we did receive a majority government but we were very clear during the election that we would reintroduce the bills that we found, in some cases, impossible to get past the opposition. This will be the fourth attempt to pass the drug component of this bill. The Liberals actually let us pass it in the House of Commons because they knew their colleagues in the Senate would hold it up forever. Then when we had a majority in the Senate, the Liberals changed their minds and opposed it in the House of Commons.

We were very clear with Canadians when we said that if we were re-elected we would reintroduce these bills. We put them together in a comprehensive package. They all deal with the subject of better protecting victims in this country. These are steps in the right direction. I am very appreciative and pleased that the Canadian public has given us this mandate.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is business as usual for the Minister of Justice, the master of demagoguery. The Conservative government and the Minister of Justice seem to feel that if we are not on their side, endorsing their measures—which are deeply controversial, especially in Quebec—we are siding with criminals. It is always the same story. We always hear the same thing from the minister, who knows full well that he does not have consensus within the justice system, again, particularly in Quebec.

This omnibus bill is deeply controversial. We are not saying that this bill does not contain some good measures. We know, as does the minister, that certain measures, particularly those concerning sexual offences against children and parole reform, are useful.

Government Orders

I think that everyone in the House agrees, and the minister knows that he could have tabled these measures separately from his omnibus bill and it would not have been an issue. They likely would have passed unanimously in the House of Commons.

As usual—and we see this with their budgets as well—the Conservatives are tabling bad measures alongside the good ones in this bill, which means that we have to come to a decision without debate. And they know that that does not work.

Did the minister consider splitting the bill so that certain measures would be passed more easily?

• (1035)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, over the years I have found that when we put a number of bills together we get complaints from the opposition that it is an “omnibus” bill. If we split them up I have had suggestions from them that we should have put them all together. Now we have them all together and opposition members are suggesting we should split them again.

Let us be honest about this. If members are opposed to getting tough on drug dealers they should say so. The bill is clear. We are going after people who bring drugs into the country. We are saying to the people who would bring drugs into Canada, which law enforcement agencies tell me is part of organized crime, that they would go to jail. If members are against that and think that is a terrible thing, that is fine. That is their opinion. However, they should not dress it up by saying that the bill should be tough on this and combined with something else or that it should be divided. Let us cut out the nonsense here.

We have put these bills together. They all make sense. They are not all of the bills that had not passed in the previous Parliament. We put nine of them together. They all stand alone in the sense that they have been looked at thoroughly by Parliament. They have been thoroughly debated and discussed in this country. I am absolutely convinced that Canadians support us on this and so should the hon. member.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Madam Speaker, based on the terminology used by the minister, we can clearly see that this is not an attempt to improve safety on our streets, but a purely partisan and political act. That is what this is.

[English]

If the minister's goal is to protect victims, why has he not moved forward in areas where there is unanimous consent of all parties in the House such as random roadside testing? Simply bringing forward what has already been approved by all the parties would save hundreds of lives a year. There is no way to put a cost on that.

There is also unanimous consent for moving forward on DNA testing. That would allow us to solve thousands of crimes per year. Yet the words chosen by the minister as he gesticulates toward his Reform Party base and says that this is about safer streets and these guys must be in favour of protecting dangerous criminals, we realize that we are faced not with an effort to improve laws in this country but an effort by the government to position itself politically.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I have experienced this spin with all the bills that we have introduced right across the board. The opposition members either immediately oppose it or they say it needs a lot of study. Most times the term “needs a lot of study” means that we will never get to vote on the issues and never get them implemented. I always hear opposition members say that we are cracking down on drug dealers and violent criminals, that if we would only get to some other area then the NDP would be right behind us and the Liberals would be cheering us on.

We all know that is a bunch of nonsense. No matter what the government introduces to crack down on crime in this country and go after those who exploit and take advantage of other people, in the end the opposition members will do one of two things, either oppose it or say that it needs a lot of study.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like the minister to be honest and admit that this bill will create more victims. The evidence is clear from the provisions in the bill that by putting more people in prison for longer periods means there will be more crime inside prisons and more crime outside prisons which would create more victims. As well, this will target the most vulnerable in our society, those with mental health challenges, youth at risk, low income families and aboriginals. The bill shifts funds to prison cells and away from the supports required for the members of those groups to live successful lives.

What research has the minister done to determine what the increase in AIDS rates would be due to this increase in prison population? The leading AIDS researcher in Canada and internationally says that the bill would undo most of the good work that has been done to prevent AIDS.

• (1040)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is from British Columbia. I have heard loud and clear from law enforcement agencies, municipal politicians and others in that part of the country how terrible and difficult some of the challenges are regarding drug crimes.

I have been told that the people who bring drugs into British Columbia are part of organized crime. If the bill is somehow creating victims out of people who bring drugs into this country, or creating victims out of these poor vulnerable gangsters who are selling drugs around schools, I want those people to know that they are vulnerable, because they are the ones we are going after. We are going after the people who bring drugs into this country and I make no apology for that.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1120)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 32)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooze	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Leitch	Lernieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poitievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger

Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Twedd
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 158

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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Clardy	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dussault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Ilsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Lcslic
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathyssen	May
McCallum	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rac	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Roussseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Sellah	Sgro

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Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)

Sims (Newton—North Delta)

Sitsabaicsan

Stewart

Sullivan

Toone

Trudeau

Valeriote — 133

St-Denis

Stoffor

Thibeault

Tremblay

Turnel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[Translation]

I wish to inform the House that because of the debate on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

● (1125)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR TIMMINS—JAMES BAY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding comments made yesterday in the debate on Libya. The member for Timmins—James Bay made a comment about me. He said:

I heard my colleague for Selkirk—Interlake use the old tired Conservative slogan: “We don’t cut and run”. Now my colleague is from farm country and probably does not know what “cut and run” means.

Standing Order 18 is quite clear that we are not supposed to be talking disrespectfully of other members in this House. Not only did he insult me, but he also insulted all farmers and anyone who lives out in farm country as being less intelligent than himself. I find that completely disrespectful and demand that he apologize or that appropriate action be taken by you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his comment. We will look at the blues and come back if necessary.

* * *

[Translation]

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise here today with a bit of a heavy heart, for the vote that was just held suggests that the work ahead of me as a new member of this 41st Parliament is perhaps less important than that of other members in past parliaments.

Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the

Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, deals with many sections and many pieces of legislation. I was told this morning that 295 witnesses appeared at 88 committee meetings in previous parliaments. Those individual bills failed to pass during previous parliaments, at least not in the form in which they were introduced by the governments in office at the time.

The government is introducing an omnibus bill that includes all these provisions. Bill C-10 is 102 pages long and includes 208 provisions that amend nine existing laws. This is not a small bill. The explanatory notes alone are 39 pages long. Not everyone in the House has experience in criminal law as it pertains to terrorism or is well versed in the laws relating to young offenders and immigration. That is a lot of things.

The leap of faith that the government is asking us to take is to find that what was done before is sufficient. In the future, when we are not happy, the axe will fall and the government will pass the bill because it committed to introduce the bill and pass it within the first 100 days of its mandate. When we disagree with the Conservatives on any part of the content or form of what they present to us, they tell us that we are in favour of criminals, child rapists and terrorists. I have a problem with this way of categorizing the serious work that all members of the House do every day.

I have a background in law. I worked in criminal law for five years when I began my practice and I was able to see the extraordinary work that the crown attorneys, judges and judiciary do; their work is not always easy. There are also defence lawyers who are obligated, under the Constitution, to represent people who are presumed innocent until proven guilty. There are some rather disturbing isolated cases that seem to have slipped through the cracks in the system. We are all aware that such is the case. I have also had a call-in radio show. Anyone who has listened to this type of show knows how things can sometimes get out of hand when people get started, particularly when such isolated cases are mentioned.

Our judicial system examines thousands and thousands of criminal cases each year. I find it a little rich that the Conservatives are introducing this 102-page bill that contains 208 provisions to amend nine existing laws on the basis of a few cases they have chosen here and there that deviate a bit from the norm.

I participated in a debate with Senator Boissvenu. I have the utmost respect and admiration for the work that he did for years after the crime that led to the loss of his two daughters. However, we must really avoid changing laws simply to respond to a need here or there.

● (1130)

The sad thing is that we on this side of the House are inclined to be in favour of some parts of the bill without even having to do much further study. We are in favour of the provisions having to do with sexual offences against children and parole. The entire system needs to be reformed, and that is often where we run into problems. But this bill lumps everything together.

Government Orders

As a member of the Barreau du Québec I can tell you that we, as lawyers, receive hours of mandatory professional training because the top priority is to protect the public. Every move a lawyer makes is scrutinized. When a lawyer goes the slightest bit off track, he or she is shown the door and is asked to report to the agency that monitors the legal profession.

The Canadian Bar Association has some valid and serious objections to this bill, not because it wants to protect criminals, but because it wants to protect what we should all be trying to protect together, and that is the penal system and the courts. We have to ensure that there is more than just the appearance of justice and that justice is actually served.

My basic concern with this bill, having practised law, is that within the Barreau du Québec and the Canadian Bar Association, two entities for which I have the utmost respect, we are going to see judges become quite apprehensive about hearing minimum sentence cases, because the bill eliminates the wonderful concept that every law student learns on their first day: every case is unique. Under the Conservatives, the concept that every case is unique no longer exists. From now on, if a person commits X crime, they receive X sentence, leaving no room to understand why the crime was committed or to see what would best serve society. Will we create hardened criminals?

Maybe the solution for the Conservatives is to keep everyone locked up for the rest of their lives regardless of the crime. That would be ridiculous. I do not want to put words in their mouths, but sometimes that is the impression the Conservatives give, because under some of the laws affected by the omnibus bill, we will no longer be able to apply this fundamental principle in law. What does that mean? It means there will be legal challenges.

I spoke to a number of my colleagues across the country as I knew that opportunities to hear from witnesses would be curtailed. I consulted several experts in the field who told me that some lawyers believe that constitutional challenges will be launched. Is it contrary to the charter in terms of unusual punishment? Is it this? Is it that? I doubt very much that we will achieve the intended results. Once again, I find it unfortunate that they are playing politics—I was going to say petty politics, but that would be unparliamentary—rather than really trying to fulfill the mandate we have been given, that is to legislate.

When I arrived here for the 41st Parliament, I believed that our job was to ensure that each bill passed is for the good of all Canadians, that each bill is useful, that each bill becomes a good law, and that each bill achieves the intended results.

I have the impression that sometimes it is a question of making headlines. Unfortunately, that does not meet the needs of victims or of the system, and it does not result in the changes the legal community is seeking.

• (1135)

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member is aware of a report that just came out from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada that points out that almost three-quarters of its case files involve drug crimes.

One of the real problems we have had is that the government has changed its drug strategy by eliminating harm reduction and focusing instead on enforcement. This is now causing the prison population to explode. We can see this from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada report.

I wonder what comments the member would have in terms of the impact on our society of this massive explosion of the prison population without the necessary services or rehabilitation or reintegration into society. This population explosion is basically for minimal drug crimes in many cases, and the bill would now exacerbate it.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

That is one of the problems with the judicial system that has come to my attention in recent years in discussions with my colleagues and police forces. Police officers were quite pleased that they would no longer have to spend an eternity on files that may seem enormous. For example, when we are talking about cultivating seven marijuana plants it is certainly less serious than when we, or the minister, talk about cultivating 200 or 250 marijuana plants. The police were happy to focus on serious crimes, crimes of violence against persons, crimes of violence against women, against aboriginal women, in short, all kinds of violence against individuals.

The government is talking about being tough on crime and cracking down on drug crimes. Mandatory minimum sentences make me think of a case I was involved in where a young person was caught with a fairly large amount of drugs. In the end, we managed to save this young man from the criminal system and to make a good citizen of him. How? By not giving him a minimum sentence.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to mention the excellent work done by my colleague from Gatineau. Once again, her speech highlighted the absurdity of the Conservatives' omnibus bill and the underlying cynicism of this fundamentally ideological and political operation, in which the government is trying to mash together a multitude of completely disparate and diverse measures. The government is creating something that will not sit well with the majority of Canadians and Quebecers. It is trying to shove this down our throats to score political points with its very conservative and ideological base, and it will try to say that the opposition, regardless of the party, is soft on crime and is on the side of the criminals. That is a very questionable political move.

I have a question for my hon. colleague. Is she concerned about the fact that this bill will transfer huge responsibilities and costs to the Canadian provinces, when many of them—particularly Ontario and Quebec—already have problems with overpopulation in prisons? The government wants to adopt measures to send a bunch of petty criminals to crime school in already overpopulated prisons.

Government Orders

● (1140)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Madam Speaker, the short answer to the question is that I am very worried. And I am not the only one. Many of the provinces are worried because they feel that they will have to deal with the fallout from the Conservative government's smoke and mirrors.

It is very interesting and illuminating to hear the Minister of Justice's responses to the direct questions asked of him, such as how much this will cost. We are not asking about the cost to victims. We already know that. When it came to the victims I represented, I often said that no sentence would satisfy them and that no amount of money would be compensation enough for the damages caused or would represent the true value of what they had lost or suffered.

That is not what we are talking about, yet the minister is constantly shifting to that argument, making it sound as though those of us on this side of the House do not care. That is not true. However, the cost of all this will have a direct impact because the provinces do not have the money and will not be able to assume the costs. So what happens when a law like this comes into effect?

[English]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act. This bill takes nine previously introduced pieces of legislation and combines them in one comprehensive crime bill.

The proposed changes in the safe streets and communities act are part of our government's ongoing action to make Canada a safer place for law-abiding Canadian families. I have listened, with a great deal of interest, to comments from several hon. members during the debate on the legislation. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak of the many benefits that the changes proposed by our government will bring.

It has been five years since our government first took office. In that time, we have worked to bring forward legislation that would hold criminals accountable, put the safety of Canadian families first and deliver the kind of justice that victims of crime expect. It has now been over five years and through many consultations and conversations with people across our country, including with constituents in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore, it could not be clearer that Canadians are concerned about the safety of their communities. They have long been calling for our government to focus on ensuring that their communities, playgrounds, streets and homes remain safe.

They have asked us to provide our law enforcement agencies with the necessary tools and modern laws that they need to make our communities safe. We have delivered.

They have asked us to increase offender accountability and to hold offenders accountable by being made to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of those crimes. We have delivered.

Canadians have asked us to be proactive by taking preventive measures to reduce crime before it happens. Again, we have delivered.

I want to touch on just a few of the examples on which our government has delivered for Canadians in these areas.

As an example, we are proud to have increased our country's law-enforcement ability by providing \$400 million toward a police officer recruitment fund. In just two years, this fund has enabled us to increase the number of police officers in Canada by more than 1,800. This goes a long way to helping us increase law-enforcement presence in communities both large and small.

We have also passed many pieces of legislation that address the concerns we have heard from victims and Canadians across the country.

[Translation]

For the past five years, we have been fully engaged in promoting healthy, safe communities for Canadians. We have introduced many measures to tackle crime, particularly violent crime and gun crimes. For example, our government took action to crack down on drive-by shootings as well as other shootings that demonstrate reckless disregard for the life or safety of others.

[English]

For example, our government has taken action to crack down on drive-by shootings and other intentional shootings that demonstrate a reckless disregard for the life or safety of others. We have taken action to eliminate the shameful practice of granting two-for-one credit, and sometimes three-for-one credit, for time served before sentencing. With this important change, we are now ensuring truth in sentencing.

We have also extended the time period that a person convicted of a serious personal injury offence, including manslaughter, must wait before applying for a pardon.

We have also passed legislation to strengthen the national sex offender registry and the national DNA data bank, marking another tremendous step forward for the protection of vulnerable people from sex offenders. Importantly, the legislation allows the police to use the national sex offender registry proactively to prevent crime.

We have also passed legislation to restore the faith of Canadians in the corrections and conditional release system by ensuring that offenders can no longer be released at one-sixth of their sentences. The Abolition of Early Parole Act abolished the practice of accelerated parole review, which allowed those convicted of first time non-violent white collar offences to obtain day parole after serving one-sixth of their sentences and full parole after serving only one-third.

Government Orders

In addition, the government has also taken action to prevent crimes before they happen. In the last year, our government funded some 160 community-based crime prevention programs through its national crime prevention strategy. These programs had an impact on the lives of nearly 10,000 at-risk youth. Crucially, we have also ensured that the youth gang prevention fund continues to help at-risk youth by including an investment of \$7.5 million annually as part of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

These are only a few of the measures we have taken to help make our streets and communities safer for law-abiding Canadian families.

However, there is more to do. That is why I am proud to be here today to talk about the safe streets and communities act.

Last May we told Canadians that if re-elected we would move quickly to introduce the past law and order legislation that would crack down on crime, gangs and terrorism. We said that we would do this within 100 sitting days of the new session of Parliament. Our government has pledged to finish what we started and move forward with this legislation to better protect Canadian families. We believe the legislation is a fair and reasonable response to ensure the safety of our communities.

Three departments are responsible for the elements found in the legislation, legislation that impacts Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Public Safety Canada is responsible for four provisions under the safe streets and communities act. The first measure amends the International Transfer of Offenders Act. We propose to include public safety as an express purpose of the act. We also propose updating the decision making criteria used by the Minister of Public Safety when making the decision to transfer Canadian offenders back to Canada to complete their sentences.

The second Public Safety Canada measure will move to enact the justice for victims of terrorism act and to amend the State Immunity Act to deter terrorism. What this means is that victims of terrorism will be able to launch a law suit in Canadian courts against the individual or organization that carried out the attack.

The third element falling within Public Safety Canada is a proposal to strengthen the legislation governing pardons. First, very important, the legislation would change the name from "pardon" to "record suspension". We have heard from victims and victims rights groups that the word "pardon" indicates that somehow the government has forgiven the person for their crime. Forgiveness is not the government's to give. No one can forgive an offender for a crime except the victim, or the victim's family. This proposal will also change the legislation so that repeat serious offenders and those who commit sexual offences against children are no longer eligible to apply for a record suspension.

Finally, we propose to strengthen the management of offenders during their incarceration and conditional release and highlight the importance of correctional plans in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders.

There are several components within Bill C-10 that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Justice. It will increase the penalties imposed for sexual offences against minors.

• (1145)

As a father of young children, I welcome these changes to protect the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society. Bill C-10 would bring forward changes that create tougher sentences for individuals found guilty of the production and possession of illicit drugs for the purposes of trafficking. It would strengthen the laws that deal with young offenders, making sure they are held accountable for their actions and that their sentences fit the crimes that they have committed. It would also bring to an end the use of conditional sentences or house arrest for violent and property crimes.

In addition, there is legislation that falls under the responsibility of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Bill C-10 would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to protect foreign workers who could become victims of human trafficking or exploitation. This is a very real problem in my city of Toronto. Finally, we will be able to pass legislation to deal with it.

None of this legislation is a surprise. Just as Canadians have been clear in supporting our efforts to improve safety and security in our communities, so too have we been clear that this legislation would be a priority in the early days of this new Parliament.

For these reasons, I urge all hon. members of the House to work with the government to ensure the swift passage of Bill C-10.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if he agrees with what Senator Boisvenu said. He was with the minister when Bill C-10 was announced, and he stated that the underlying reason for omnibus Bill C-10 is the fact that, in general, sentences imposed by the Canadian judiciary are too lenient, and that is what the Conservative government wants to address.

Does the member agree with this statement, that this basically boils down to the fact that Canadian judges impose sentences that are too lenient?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the honourable member's question.

[English]

The legislation is responding to the needs of Canadians, especially victims. Victims groups and individual victims have been saying for a long time that their needs are not being reflected in the current laws and also the sentencing guidelines. That is why we introduced this legislation.

Police officers are very supportive of Bill C-10. Canadian Police Association President Tom Stamatakis said:

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As a police officer, and as a parent myself, I can't possibly overemphasize the need for the longer sentences this bill provides, to keep these serious offenders off our streets, but perhaps just as important, the creation of the two new offences, particularly prohibition from using any means of telecommunications, including the Internet, to agree or make arrangements with another person for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against a child, is exactly the sort of modernization of the Criminal Code that our members need to deal with today's technologically savvy criminal.

There is a lack of modernization in our current legislation. We are trying to bring this up to 2011, into the 21st century. It is high time. We have been talking about this legislation for several years. These are not surprises and we urge the—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[Translation]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the honourable member told us that he is the father of young children. So am I.

[English]

We lived for a little while in Oakland, California and at nights we could hear gunshots in the distance. California is a jurisdiction that has tried with its “three strikes you're out” law to put more people in jail for longer time periods. It found it ended up spending more money on prisons than on education. This is a jurisdiction which was not made safer for little kids by putting more people in jail.

This is an example of a case where Conservatives putting more people in jail for longer time periods has not made the streets and communities safer, and has imposed a tax burden on future generations. What is the member's answer to that? Can he answer the question that my daughter would want to ask if she were here today?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Madam Speaker, I can respond to the question from the hon. member who is a father like I am, and I can say that his daughter would not be the victim of an offender who is locked up in prison. She would be protected from him.

Many times in the debate I hear members opposite draw false analogies with the situation in the United States and use the term “three strikes and you're out”. This is not “three strikes and you're out” for minor offences. The offences we are trying to deal with are major, violent, aggressive offences against the security and safety of Canadians. This is a completely different situation.

In terms of the question about the prison population, the federal prison population is about 14,000 and there are various models that have been put forward. It is impossible to determine exactly what the outcome will be, but we do not anticipate that this is going to be the bursting at the seams prison situation that the opposition describes. At any rate, it is far safer for Canadians to have those violent and aggressive offenders locked up than on the streets.

• (1155)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Madam Speaker, I stand today in opposition to Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill. I do not stand in opposition to every part of the bill and indeed some parts of Bill C-10 worthwhile.

As a father myself, I have no objection to protecting children against pedophiles and sexual predators. I have no objection to

protecting people against violent crimes, of course not, even though the Conservatives may have people believe otherwise. However, that is the rub with Bill C-10, which throws so many pieces of legislation, nine pieces of legislation, aboard the one bus, the one omnibus bill.

I may agree with coming down hard on pedophiles, but I do not agree with filling prisons with people who probably should not be there, like the people who get caught with some marijuana plants. What will throwing a student into jail do for him or her, or for society in general, besides costing us a fortune in new human cages? My answer is nothing. It will do absolutely nothing.

Bill C-10 is also known as the safe streets and communities act which, to quote *The Telegram*, the daily newspaper in my riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl, sounds like a new and improved detergent, except Bill C-10 will not make our streets any cleaner. It will not wash away the crime. In fact, chances are, if we put a dirty sock through the omnibus cycle, the sock will come out just as dirty on the other end.

The Conservative detergent: so much of Bill C-10 is a waste of money. It will have no impact on the tougher elements of our society. If anything, Bill C-10 will soak up so much cash to keep what will eventually be our U.S.-style prisons going that there will not be any money left over for infrastructure, such as streets. Forget keeping our streets clean.

The Conservative government has yet to put a price tag on Bill C-10, but it is fair to say it will cost untold billions of dollars as our prisons bulge at the seams. According to a joint statement by the John Howard Society and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, the increased costs associated with just one of the bills in Bill C-10 will be more than \$5 billion. That is more than double current expenditures for the corrections systems alone.

Furthermore, the provinces and territories would have to contribute the largest portion of the increase. I am sure they will be delighted to step forward.

I do not know about other provinces, but Newfoundland and Labrador's prison system could not handle any more prisoners. Her Majesty's Penitentiary in St. John dates back to Victorian times. The original stone building first opened in 1859. The pen is an aging fortress that has been called an appalling throwback to 19th century justice, which sounds like Bill C-10.

How do people in my riding feel about Bill C-10? I had one particular gentleman write to say he is disgusted. Let me quote from that letter:

This is taking us in the wrong direction both socially and fiscally. I do not want to live in a country with a justice system based on a model developed in the dark ages. We do not need more prisons. We do not need to be taking discretion away from justices of the peace, and we do not need more blanket mandatory sentencing guidelines that will do more harm than good.

Most of all...I'm concerned about "The Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act". Yes, I'm concerned about the ongoing substance abuse problems we have in this province and my concerns about the pending legislation doesn't mean I support a legal free for all when it comes to drugs, but increased mandatory sentences for growing a half dozen plants is insane...Who is helped by having a student, a future doctor or engineer, thrown in jail for a year and a half because they decided to make some hash for their own personal use? In what universe does that make sense?...Stop wasting money on cages and start spending it on hospital beds and textbooks.

That is the line that sticks, "Stop wasting money on cages and start spending it on hospital beds and textbooks". That is a great quote.

• (1200)

According to Statistics Canada, in 2008-09 the average annual cost of keeping an inmate incarcerated was \$110,000. Where I come from, in Newfoundland and Labrador, that would pay for roughly two degrees, or eight years of university.

To quote the daily newspaper from my riding once again:

We may buck the American trend — where increasing the number of prisoners has not brought a reduction in crime rates — but the smart money says we'll simply pay more to keep more people in prison and do little to change crime rates, which are among the lowest we've had in decades. You can argue that tougher sentences will make Canada a harder place to do shifty business, but the jury's out on whether it will end up making this country a better place to live.

The jury is still out.

Bill C-10 will not make Canada a better place to live. It will change Canada. It will change how we see ourselves as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as Canadians, and how we are seen on the world stage. Lock them up and throw away the key has not worked well in other tough love jurisdictions, the United States, for example.

For every 100,000 people, the United States holds 724 people in prison. In comparison, for every 100,000 people, Canada has 117 people in prison. That is a big difference.

The question that must be asked until there is an answer is, if there are longer stipulated jail sentences for crimes such as growing a few pot plants, who pays for the dramatic increases in the cost of incarceration of both federal and provincial prisons? Is that the next Conservative action plan or job plan that we have been waiting so long to hear about? Is it to build new cages across the country?

As for other sections of the omnibus crime bill, legislation that allows for victims of terrorism to sue perpetrators, including foreign countries, would do absolutely nothing to deter or prevent terrorism acts. To cut to the chase, suing a terrorist organization in a Canadian court would get us absolutely nowhere. No, that is not quite correct, it would get us in debt.

Returning to the section of Bill C-10 that would impose mandatory minimum sentences for the production, possession and trafficking in certain drugs like marijuana, experts have consistently said that mandatory minimum sentences do not work for reducing drug use, tackling organized crime, or for making our communities safer.

How about taking the money from building more cages and putting it into rehabilitation and retraining programs? That is a novel idea. That makes more sense. That is the Canadian way. Bill C-10 is not the Canadian way.

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Nothing in the Conservative crime bill deals with prevention, but 80% of people in federal prison deal with at least one addiction. Dr. Julio Montaner, immediate past president of the International AIDS Society, said that the Conservative government's crime agenda would jeopardize the health of some marginalized people. He said:

[the bill] would make it more difficult for physicians to deliver public health services to people who are poor, First Nations, mentally ill, at risk of HIV, or drug-addicted.

He also said:

This law is all about incarcerating the people that this government views as the "other Canadians" for which they have no time for or no interest.

Speaking for myself, my party believes in leaving nobody behind, leaving no Canadian behind, marginalizing nobody.

• (1205)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the NDP for eloquently stating his party's position.

There are aspects in Bill C-10 that are very tempting, especially for people who grow pot. I have to say that in my area I have had my share of grow-house operations.

However, in looking at the cost, the Parliamentary Budget Officers says that we would spend about \$13 billion to go this way. I wonder if my colleague from the NDP would like to share some of his concerns.

I would personally like to see a little of that money, if that would actually be the figure, \$13 billion, to be spent on putting people in the right direction. Maybe we could spend more money on immigrants and give immigrant communities money that the Conservative government took away from in Toronto.

Does my hon. colleague feel that this spending of money is wise or are we going down a false path?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about the figure of \$13 billion. The point that we have been trying to get to is that there is no cost on this omnibus crime bill. We do not know the cost. From what I hear, and I have been listening, I do not think the Conservatives have put a figure on this yet. I do not think they have a true cost. That is one of the worries.

The other worry is with all these new prisoners going into the penal system across the country. I have read some estimates of between 3,000 and 5,000 more people will be entering our prison system. In my province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we have, what I mentioned in my speech, Her Majesty's Penitentiary. It is a medium-sized prison. It takes in federal prisoners but it is bulging at the seams. We cannot take in any more.

There is no money for rehabilitation and no money for programs. That is the bigger concern.

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Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member opposite that simple possession is not targeted in this legislation, although the reference continues to be to someone growing a few plants.

In the member's hypothetical student example, if that hypothetical student were proven to be trafficking illicit drugs to elementary school children or proven to be handing over his revenue from the sale of hard drugs, such as methamphetamine, to members of organized crime, would the member not agree that the person needs to be dealt with as a serious offender?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, that is the problem we have with this omnibus crime bill and how the Conservatives are trying to sell it. The Conservatives are trying to sell it as being fair.

Would I have a problem with someone growing marijuana and selling it to school children or selling crystal to school children being dealt with as a serious offender? Of course not. I have no problem with that whatsoever. They should be in jail. That is just wrong. That is something that the New Democrats and Canadians in general are absolutely against.

The problem that we see here is the fact that someone who has grown some plants, who has made a mistake and done something against the law, could be put in jail with the key thrown away. Some people, who jail would do nothing for and who should not be in jail, would be put in jail. Our jails would be bulging at the seams. That is what we are against.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Conservatives are trying to leave an impression that somehow there is no enforcement or no legislation.

The debate here is about mandatory minimums and whether they work. Is the member aware that in the United States, where we have seen the history of mandatory minimums, many of those laws are now being repealed because they have been such a massive failure?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, I am aware. What the Conservatives are trying to do here with this omnibus crime bill has been tried in other jurisdictions, as the hon. member just pointed out, like in the United States, and it does not work. Therefore, why we are trying to do it here is beyond me. I do not have an answer.

• (1210)

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in favour of Bill C-10, the safe streets and communities bill.

Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe. Part of that important mandate is protecting Canadians both at home and abroad from threats of terrorism, while giving those who do fall victim to a terrorist act the tools they need to have their voices heard.

Since coming to office in 2006, we have been clear: a Conservative government is a government that will put the protection of law-abiding Canadians first. We have taken strong action to fulfill our commitment to protect Canadians by taking a tough on crime approach and giving our law enforcement agencies the resources and tools they need to do their jobs. We have also

moved forward in many areas to crack down on crime and to ensure that our streets and communities are safe and secure.

When talking to my constituents, I hear a common theme. They tell me that they want a justice system that actually delivers justice and a corrections system that actually corrects. I believe the legislation in front of us today is an important step forward in that regard.

We will continue to reverse the shameful trend which began under the Trudeau regime where former solicitor general, Jean-Pierre Goyer, stated that the protection of society was a secondary objective to protecting the rights of criminals. Our Conservative government completely rejects that premise and will continue to work to return common sense to the correctional system.

Recently, all of us have witnessed the terrible consequences that terrorism can have for individuals and communities across the globe. In our time, terrorism has left casualties from New York to New Delhi. We know that Canada is not immune to the threat of radicalized terrorism. We need to recall the hundreds of Canadians who died in the atrocity of the Air India attack and all those who lost their lives on 9/11.

We should not forget that Canada has been named as a target by organizations such as Al-Qaeda. We have also seen the successful prosecution of homegrown terrorists who were arrested before they had a chance to carry out their sadistic plot.

It is starkly clear that Canada has a large role to play in the global fight against terrorism, a role that we have played and will continue to play in the battle against those who use senseless violence against civilians.

That is why I will focus my remarks on Bill C-10 today on justice for the victims of terrorism.

These amendments would strengthen Canada's ability to expose and cut off the material support for terrorism. They would ensure that those who do fall victim to terrorism are able to seek justice and that those who commit or support terrorist acts are held accountable for their actions.

Terrorist groups rarely act alone. The scale and sophistication of terrorist operations demand a vast amount of financial and organizational support. That support often comes from within states led by radical anti-western governments. Many observers have often described the relationship between terrorist groups and certain governments as one of a state operating within a state. Shockingly, on occasion, private individuals living right here in Canada can be sources of support for those who wish to attack our country.

The fact is that money is the lifeblood of terrorism. One of the most effective ways to stop terrorists is to strike at their largest vulnerability, which is their wallets. Bill C-10 aims to do that by holding terrorists and those who support them fully financially accountable.

Bill C-10 would create a cause of action to allow victims of terrorism to sue terrorists and supporters of terrorism for any loss or damages that occurred as a result of terrorist acts committed anywhere in the world on or after January 1, 1985. The target of these suits will include individuals, organizations and certain states that the government has listed for their support to terrorism.

• (1215)

In the case of states, Bill C-10 proposes the creation of a government list of states that there are reasonable grounds to believe support terror. Those states would no longer be immune from civil action. This would allow Canadian courts to hold these supporters of terrorism accountable for their conduct.

On the recommendation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, a state would be added to a list of designated states if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the state supports or has supported a terrorist entity listed under the Criminal Code.

The Criminal Code currently lists 44 entities as terrorist organizations. These organizations are subject to rigorous and regular review. States that financially support these organizations cannot be considered a friend of Canada.

We will take all the appropriate precautions to minimize any potential negative impact on Canadian trade or foreign relations or threats to Canadian personnel, interests and citizens abroad when listing and delisting states.

Bill C-10 would also establish a review mechanism to ensure the timely removal of states from a list if they clean up their act and no longer support terrorism. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, would review the list every two years to determine whether listed states should remain on the list. Ministers would also review information on non-listed states every two years to determine whether any other state should be added to that list.

Additionally, a listed state could apply to be removed from the list by submitting a written application. Once this application is received, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would, after consulting with the Minister of Public Safety, decide whether there were reasonable grounds to recommend to the Governor in Council that the state no longer be listed.

As important as the ability to sue states that support terror is that individuals and corporations that support these actions would also be held liable. Financiers of terror would be held accountable.

Bill C-10 would do more than just create a cause of action for victims of terrorism. It would also allow victims who have successfully sued a terrorist entity or supporter to request assistance from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance in identifying and locating in Canada the property of that entity.

Several years ago, the world witnessed the effectiveness of those measures when the families of the Lockerbie bombing victims were given the right to sue the Gadhafi Libya regime for the role it played in supporting this horrific act of terrorism. The former government of Libya subsequently admitted its part in the attack, provided compensation to the families and renounced the use of terrorism.

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Creating this cause of action would hold terrorism and its supporters to account through the courts, giving victims the opportunity to seek justice. This is something victims have sought for some time and our Conservative government is proud to deliver.

I urge all members to give speedy passage to Bill C-10. I especially urge my colleagues in the NDP to support the bill and put the rights of victims and law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of terrorists and their supporters. We must stand united in sending a message to those who commit terrorist acts and to those whose support them that they will be held accountable for their actions.

• (1220)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for mentioning a couple of words. He kept talking about terrorism and about protecting Canadians abroad. He also said something about a shameful trend. I will tell him about a shameful trend.

A Canadian by the name of Colin Rutherford has been held by the Taliban for several months now. It will be a year in November. I have asked the government time and time again for information. This individual is being held by terrorists and his family is suffering

I want the hon. gentleman to tell me if that is not a shameful trend when the government is shutting up and is saying absolutely nothing to the family that wants to get news and wants to know what it is doing. Not only that, the government is even refusing to give me information.

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, the mandate our government received in the last election is to protect the rights of Canadians, be it here in Canada or abroad. That is exactly what we are doing.

All of the measures that are in Bill C-10 have been before Parliament. They have been debated for the most part and now Canadians expect us to implement the measures and put them to work. That is exactly what the government will be doing.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague on his speech. I thought it was incredibly relevant to the threats and risks that countries like Canada and many of our allies and partners around the world are facing today. He laid out in very concrete terms why this legislation is important, with specific reference to countering terrorism.

Could he tell the House what the consequences might be of not enacting measures of this kind, and what danger of further impunity for terrorist groups to operate in Canada or elsewhere that might represent for the people of Canada?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

Government Orders

Obviously as Canadians we are all concerned about terrorist activities, be they within Canada or abroad. Canadians expect us to take action as their representatives. We are here to represent their best interests. If we choose not to take any action on this, God forbid, we do not want to see another tragedy like the Air India tragedy in 1984. We do not want to see another 9/11. By implementing this important piece of legislation, if we help prevent one more serious tragedy, it will be well worth it.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about stopping terrorists by striking their wallets. It seems that the same government that says it wants to stop terrorists by striking their wallets may have been paying off terrorists like al-Qaeda in North Africa in order to secure the release of Canadians. It seems that the terrorists may have reinvested that dividend into more terrorism.

Where is the consistency of the government that claims it wants to stop terrorists by striking their wallets?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has made it very clear that it does not negotiate with any terrorist organization whatsoever. We have a very strong record when it comes to combatting criminal activities, be they crimes committed here or terrorist activities abroad. That is exactly why our very brave men and women are serving our great country around the world. They are protecting us and the democracy and freedom that we so much enjoy here in Canada.

• (1225)

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-10, erroneously entitled the "Safe Streets and Communities Act". Bill C-10 is comprised of nine stand-alone justice bills that died, for good reason I might add, during the previous parliamentary session. These nine bills, justly negated then, are back to haunt Canada in the form of an omnibus mega-bill, or what some have referred to as an ominous bill, seeking to destroy the fair and equitable justice system Canadians from coast to coast to coast have come to rely on for their justice and protection.

I am especially disheartened to see that, at a time when almost two million Canadians are looking for jobs in a struggling economy, the Conservatives' priority is backwards crime legislation.

The Liberal Party knows Canadians want a safe and fair justice system. The facts tell us that Bill C-10 will not deliver that. The Conservatives chose to ignore the facts and instead are intent on pushing through C-10. What we witnessed here today was a miscarriage of justice with the closure motion, which passed because the government has a majority. It is scary when things like that happen because members of the government are speaking from both sides of their mouths.

In fact, the Minister of Public Safety said in speaking to another closure motion, "If the bill was the right thing to do, why did the Prime Minister do the wrong thing by invoking closure?"

At one time, another member of the government, who is now the citizenship and immigration minister, said, "I begin by condemning this government for allowing itself to trample on democracy and democratic deliberation by invoking closure and time allocation on Bill C-36".

Another member of the government, now the Minister of National Defence, said, "Let me be clear. What is happening in this motion, in this use of closure, is an attempt to stifle the debate, to shut it down, to sideline it, to distract, to detract away from the opposition's job to be diligent in asking questions".

I mention those comments to point out the miscarriage of justice here today with this closure motion and how the government is speaking from both sides of its mouth.

Despite the overwhelming evidence and substantive trial and failure of the very same legislation in the United States as we are seeing today in Bill C-10, the Conservatives blindly steamroll ahead. If this type of legislation had any positive effect at all on the safety of citizens and the protection of victims, the United States would be the safest country in the world. Sadly, that is not the case. If C-10 type legislation truly worked, we would not see the Americans' experience with their failed system for over 25 years. For example, Newt Gingrich, who many consider to be the architect of the botched American prison system, declared that his tough-on-crime agenda failed and that the criminal justice system founded on the same blind policies included in C-10 is "broken".

The Americans spent \$68 million in 2010 on corrections, which is 300% more than was spent 25 years before, and their prison population is growing 13 times more rapidly than their population. Clearly, the American model of mandatory minimums did not work in the United States of America and predictably, it will not work in Canada.

We already know that. One need merely to consider the evidence to conclude that the failed justice policies of our American friends imported to Canada will only become failed justice policies of our own. Why is the government not prepared to learn from those mistakes instead of forging ahead prepared to make the same mistakes at enormous cost to the Canadian taxpayer?

Unfortunately for Canadians, the Conservatives have a penchant for ignoring evidence and logic. The fact is that crime in Canada is decreasing. According to Statistics Canada it is at its lowest level since 1973. Existing policies developed in consultation with the provinces by previous governments, many of them Liberal by the way, are working.

The lack of logic was on display only last year when former Conservative minister Stockwell Day reported that the Conservatives intended to build more prisons in order to address unreported crime. This is just one example of the Conservatives' appetite to blindly conclude that the solution to any problem is to build more prisons. That is the problem.

● (1230)

I read with interest recently a letter to the editor written by Dr. Jim Lang of the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. According to Dr. Lang, the Minister of Justice tells us that his government will not let facts or statistics derail its ideological decision to spend our money to make us feel safer on our streets whether we think it is best for us or not. He said that the justice minister cites statistics, the election outcome for example, as justification for the same decision. What is interesting about the content of the letter is that Dr. Lang said that this does not make him feel safer at all, just confused and worried about what those guys will do next and on what pretext.

I agree wholeheartedly with his opinion given that while the government has a majority, it only has 39% of the popular vote, so 61% of voters did not vote for the Conservatives, yet they are going blindly ahead putting something in place that they think is the right thing to do without even considering the views of the majority of Canadians.

Another letter, written by William Trudell, the chair of the Canadian Council of Criminal Defence Lawyers, pleaded with parliamentarians to carefully review this legislation to ensure that it is in the best interests of all Canadians and does not fracture our criminal justice system. The writer said that it does not take a tough on crime agenda to allow judicial discretion to ensure that those genuinely in need find themselves in hospitals and not jails.

Unfortunately, the Conservative crime agenda fails to understand the connection between issues of addiction and mental health and the issue of crime. It is a crime that those very vulnerable in our society will be impacted negatively by Bill C-10.

The government refuses to come clean about the true costs of its crime agenda, which begs the question as to why. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, said that the price tag for just a few of the measures of the crime agenda will cost over \$13 billion. That is the price tag for just a few, not the entire nine bills that are included in this omnibus bill.

As the global economy contracts, Canada has to ensure that we get value for tax dollars. We have heard the government say that, yet Conservatives spend untold billions on a failed crime agenda that takes a blind and unrealistic approach to public safety and does not create safer communities and is not a wise or effective use of Canadians' hard-earned money. Many of these costs will be downloaded on the provinces which can ill-afford such a burden.

I represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as the member of Parliament for Random—Burin—St. George's. Our province does not need to be saddled with more inmates and stripped of any judicial discretion. The Liberal Party will not put Canadians at risk by helping to implement this dangerous bill. In order to safeguard the rights and safety of all Canadians, we must oppose Bill C-10.

While the government stands on a soapbox to promote the bill and claims that the bill will help victims, sadly, legislation such as Bill C-10 will only ensure a continued cycle of victimization. The evidence indicates that preventive policy and education, not tougher

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sentences and bloated prisons, are the path to safer streets and communities. After all, the government can talk all it wants about the rights of victims, but the truth is the right of every Canadian is to not be victimized at all.

The Liberal Party is committed to ensuring a justice approach that is evidence based, cost-effective and focused on crime prevention.

The Canadian Bar Association has said that the mandatory minimum sentences and overreliance on incarceration, constraints on judges' discretion to ensure a fair result in each case and the bill's impact on specific already disadvantaged groups are problems with the bill.

● (1235)

Why is it we do not listen to those who deal with the people who need the services on a daily basis to ensure that they are not victimized? Why is it we are refusing to listen to them? Why is it we are not hearing what is being said?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had to rejoin the debate after hearing the speech from my hon. colleague opposite.

If the Liberal Party opposes mandatory minimums, then why did it bring in mandatory minimums in response to 9/11 in its Anti-terrorism Act?

The Liberals are not opposed to mandatory minimums. They are just opposed when Conservatives bring in mandatory minimums. The Liberals are all in favour of them and brought in mandatory minimums themselves. Why? Because the public believes in governments that respond to and get tough on crime.

The hon. member presents our crime agenda as though it is a this-or-that approach. We have and support successful programs that help those who are most in need and those who can be subject to restorative justice. We have those programs in my riding. I am proud to support them because they work.

However, with regard to career criminals they do not work. Therefore, we need a justice system that is about justice, not just about serving lawyers.

My hon. colleague also said the government is ignoring evidence. It is quite the opposite. As a matter of fact, it is Liberal attorneys general in Ontario, P.E.I. and British Columbia who are supporting our legislation because they recognize that this works. The member said the Liberal Party is against it. That is absolutely not true.

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Finally, she said that we are acting blindly. It is quite the opposite. We know exactly what we are doing. We are responding to the mandate Canadians gave us. This is what Canadians elected us to do and we will get it done. It is because we are doing this that we were entrusted with a majority government and the Liberals have only 34 seats.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there was a question in that dissertation. I acknowledge that the hon. minister has the right to say whatever he feels he must say. However, the situation is one where as a country we cannot afford to spend untold billions on a crime agenda nor should we victimize the most vulnerable in our society.

Today there are people in prisons who have mental issues, who are aboriginal, et cetera. As well, there are young people in prisons who have made mistakes. They want help and need help to deal with their mistakes. They should not be incarcerated in prisons with hardened criminals. At the end of the day, when they get out they might be worse off than they were when they went in.

That is not the proper thing to do, but that is what the government is focusing on. It is taking advantage of the most vulnerable with what it is proposing in Bill C-10.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's raised some good points in her statement.

She spoke about the numbers that have been thrown about, including the figure of \$13 billion for the implementation of several of the acts in the bill.

What does she think the impact will be on the Newfoundland and Labrador prison system which is already inadequate and bulging at the seams?

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I both know of the situation in the prison in St. John's, which also houses federal prisoners. At this point, it cannot possibly house any more. There are two or three inmates sharing a cell. That is unhealthy under any circumstances.

We need to do more in the way of prevention to ensure we do not have to build megaprisons to house criminals. The way to do that is by focusing on prevention by putting the billions of dollars in funding that would be wasted on this crime agenda toward working with people in terms of prevention programs.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative speakers on the bill have negatively characterized with disdain the fact that rehabilitation was introduced into one of the principles of sentencing about 40 years ago.

I would ask the hon. member to correlate that rehabilitation principle with the facts. Where have crime rates gone over the last 40 years?

• (1240)

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, since the previous governments, mainly Liberal, introduced the whole idea of dealing more effectively with crime, statistics have pointed to the fact that crime is decreasing.

Clearly, we have made the right decision to go down that path. The government is trying to fix something that is not broken.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act. It is a bill that is very important to residents in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and certainly across Canada.

The June 2011 Speech from the Throne recognized the government's fundamental duty to protect the personal safety of all Canadians. Toward this end we have committed to reintroduce law and order legislation to combat crime, including protecting children from sex offenders, eliminating house arrest and pardons for serious crimes, and protecting the most vulnerable in society, our children.

Bill C-10 supports this commitment. It is a comprehensive package of law reforms that had been proposed in nine bills before the previous Parliament, but which died with the dissolution of that Parliament for the general election.

Part 1, clauses 2 to 9, of Bill C-10 includes reforms to support victims of terrorism. These were proposed in former Bill S-7, the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act.

Part 2, clauses 10 to 51, proposes sentencing reforms to address child sexual exploitation, serious drug offences, and to eliminate the use of conditional sentences for serious, violent and property crimes. It incorporates reforms that were proposed in former Bills C-54, the Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act, S-10, the Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act and C-16, the Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act.

Part 3, clauses 52 to 166, includes post-sentencing reforms to increase offender accountability, eliminate pardons for serious crimes, and revise the criteria for determining international transfers of Canadian offenders. These reforms were proposed in former Bills C-39, the Ending Early Release for Criminals and Increasing Offender Accountability Act, C-23, the Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act, C-59, the Abolition of Early Parole Act and C-5, the Keeping Canadians Safe (International Transfer of Offenders) Act.

Part 4, clauses 167 to 204, proposes reforms to the Youth Criminal Justice Act to better protect Canadians from violent young offenders. These had been proposed in former Bill C-4, Sébastien's Law (Protecting the Public from Violent Young Offenders).

Part 5 of Bill C-10 proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to protect foreign workers against abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and human trafficking. These amendments had been proposed in former Bill C-56, the Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act.

Many of these proposed reforms were debated and studied in the previous Parliament. I welcome their reintroduction in this new Parliament.

I will focus my remaining time on Bill C-10's proposal to better protect children against sexual exploitation.

As with its predecessor Bill C-54, the objectives of Bill C-10's child sexual exploitation reforms are twofold. First, they seek to ensure that for sentencing purposes all child sexual offences are treated severely and consistently. Second, they seek to protect children by preventing the commission of these offences. Bill C-10 does this by imposing stiffer and stronger penalties.

Bill C-10 proposes numerous amendments to enhance the penalties or sentences of imprisonment that are currently imposed for sexual offences involving child victims. It imposes new or higher mandatory minimum sentences of imprisonment as well as higher maximum penalties for certain offences.

Currently, the Criminal Code has an inconsistent approach regarding penalties for sexual offences involving a child victim. For instance, there are 12 child-specific sexual offences that impose a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment, yet there are other child-specific offences that do not impose a minimum penalty.

Similarly, the general sexual offences that apply to both adult and child victims alike do not impose any mandatory minimum penalty where the victim is a child.

As the grandfather of two granddaughters, one six years old and the other three years old, this means a lot to me. The bill serves to strengthen the laws that protect our children and the vulnerable. There should be no question about supporting this bill.

•(1245)

Mandatory minimum penalties are exception In the Criminal Code of Canada. Generally, they have been imposed because Parliament has determined that the nature of a particular offence is sufficiently serious to include a sentence of imprisonment. That sentence was devised to best reflect the facts and circumstances of the case and does not get lost between the mandatory minimum period of time to the prescribed maximum penalty. Where mandatory minimum sentences are imposed, a conditional sentence of imprisonment is never appropriate for the offence.

Given this understanding of mandatory minimum sentences of imprisonment, the effect of imposing these in only some but not all sexual offences where the victim is a child suggests that some child sexual offences are more serious than others. It is ludicrous to suggest that some child victims have been less victimized than others. I cannot understand that thought process.

In my view, this contradicts a fundamental value of Canadian society, namely that all children are among our most vulnerable and that all are deserving of equal protection against all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Therefore, I welcome the proposals of Bill C-10 to impose mandatory minimum sentences for seven sexual offences wherein the victim is a child and where currently mandatory minimum sentences are not imposed.

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Bill C-10 also proposes to impose higher mandatory minimum sentences for nine offences that already carry a minimum sentence. These increases would ensure that the minimum sentence is not only in line with the offence in question but also is coherent with the minimum sentences imposed for other offences.

As well, Bill C-10 proposes to create two new offences to prevent the commission of a contact sexual offence against a child. Both of these offences would also impose mandatory minimum sentences.

I would also note that Bill C-10 proposes a few sentencing reforms that were not included in Bill C-54. These changes are entirely consistent with the overall sentencing objectives of former Bill C-54 and seek to better reflect the particularly heinous nature of these offences.

Finally, these changes would increase the maximum penalty and corresponding mandatory minimum sentences for four child sex offences. When proceeded on summary conviction, subsections 163.1(2), making child pornography, and 163.1(3), distribution, et cetera, of child pornography, propose to increase the maximum penalty from 18 months to 2 years less a day as well as increase the current minimum sentence from 90 days to 6 months.

In section 170, parent or guardian procuring sexual activity, the bill proposes to increase the minimum penalty from 6 months to 1 year and the maximum penalty from 5 years to 10 years where the victim is under the age of 16 years, and the minimum from 45 days to 6 months and the maximum from 2 years to 5 years respectively where the victim is 16 to 17 years old.

I hope that all hon. members will work with us to support the expeditious enactment of these much needed reforms.

In closing, as members of Parliament we all have a number of issues that come before us. In my seven years in this great place the one thing that I consistently hear from my constituents, especially those with children, young children and grandchildren, is the lack of rights for victims in this country. We worry more about the rights of criminals than victims, which is a sad case. The pendulum has swung too far one way. I am proud to be part of a government that would straighten that out.

I look forward to all hon. members in the House supporting Bill C-10.

•(1250)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound mentioned his two young granddaughters.

I am the father of two daughters. One is 11 years old and the other is 7 years old. I am particularly concerned about the possibility of a sexual assault occurring because of those people on the street who take advantage of our children. Would the member highlight the areas of the bill that he believes would send them a message?

Sending a message to those people who would prey on innocent children is key. It would be a deterrent for them to know there are stiff penalties in place which their snazzy defence attorneys are unable to bargain or whittle down in a courtroom because the law is tough on that.

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Does the member agree? Could he speak more on that particular part of the bill?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to welcome my colleague officially into the House. I enjoy working with him.

I am glad to hear his comments about his young family. While my family has grown up, I did mention my two granddaughters. It is very obvious that the member gets it when it comes to protecting the rights of young and innocent children and that is what a lot of the bill would do.

He talks about the message that the bill sends, that if people want to mess with our young children, the vulnerable, the next generation, and in my case it is not just the next generation but it is my pride and joy, there will be a price to pay. For too long the sentences were almost laughable.

Another message that it sends very strongly to victims is that while we cannot right what was done to them, we certainly can make offenders do the time for the crime.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the comments my hon. colleague makes are interesting. However, flipping through the Quorum before us today, 97% of the articles in it question the viability of Bill C-10, condemning it, talking about how we will only add more victims of crime and increase costs. Money that should go into crime prevention will go to putting more people in jail.

The member should read Quorum. There is no support for Bill C-10 as far as the general public is concerned, yet the member continues to say he is representing more so than the rest of us in the House.

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I have worked with my colleague in the House and while we sit on opposite sides, I have a lot of respect for her.

I have not read Quorum yet, but I think the point she was trying to make to me was that it was unbelievable that there were still people out there who had written to our national papers, basically sticking out for criminals instead of victims. Like her, I find it very shocking.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, along the same vein, has my colleague seen an article by Newt Gingrich in *The Washington Post*. He cites that the Americans 30 years of tough on crime legislation has been a catastrophic failure. He cites recent empirical evidence for the state of Texas where in 2007 it decided that building more prisons rather than opting for prevention was a mistake and it has changed that now, saving \$2 billion. That money has been put into drug courts, which deal with substance abuse as a medical instead of a criminal problem, and into several crime prevention measures instead of punitive measures to make its streets safer. Because of that, its crime rates have dropped by 10% in that short period of time. Is he aware of that?

•(1255)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen that article. However, my priority here, and I think it is that of all of us in this great House, should be on doing what is right for Canada. The member talks about things we can do to deter criminals instead of locking them up.

I want to make mention of a first-ever program that the Minister of Justice put in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound about three

years ago. Equine and partner training is for young people who got involved in drugs, not because they were bad kids but because they got mixed up with the wrong people. It is a great program and I mention it as one example of the kinds of things we will continue to do.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is possibly one thing we agree on, and that is the Conservatives have branded and wrapped themselves in a cloak of crime and punishment. As a result, they are blind to the evidence, the costs and the fact that we have the lowest crime rate since 1973.

The Conservatives are blind to building safe and healthy communities. They are blind to the horrendous experience of the U.S. in its war on drugs regime, which now is slowly repealed, including the repeal of mandatory minimum sentencing, as my colleague from Winnipeg Centre just pointed out, because of its catastrophic failure on people and society overall. The Conservatives are blind to the evidence in Canada and to the real impact these bills would have on the lives of people and communities overall.

Added to that, the Conservative members are blind to parliamentary democracy. With this bill and the steady stream of other bills that we have seen, they are only interested in manipulating people, creating fear and division and creating a them and us scenario. I believe, from the bottom of my heart, the omnibus bill before us today is offensive. It is politically motivated and would have enormous negative impacts.

I was involved in some of these bills previously, particularly the drug crime bill, which I will go into.

Listening to the debate, I find it astounding to hear how the Conservatives are completely divorced from the reality of what is going on. They cannot recognize that we have the lowest crime rate since 1973. They cannot comprehend or deal with the fact that federal and provincial prisons are skyrocketing and prisoners are double and even triple bunking, resulting, in part, from bills like the Truth in Sentencing Act, which was passed in the last Parliament.

I wish the Conservatives had the courage to bring forward a truth in prison costs bill because maybe then we would have a better handle on what is really going on here.

The fact is these nine bills have no relevancy together. They have been politically put together in one bill to ram them through the House in 100 days.

That defies the reality of the 2010-11 annual report that just came out from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. It shows us that almost three-quarters, or 72%, of all cases handled by federal prosecutors last year involved drug cases, about 58,000 cases. Of those cases, only about 2% were complex, meaning that the vast majority of them were actually straightforward in terms of the impact of some of these bills and the kind of law enforcement approach that the Conservative government has taken.

The Conservatives also hid the real costs of this bill and all the bills in the package from Canadians during the election. We know that the real costs will be billions of dollars both in terms of the provincial cost in prisons and the federal costs.

I have heard so many times that the Conservatives are trying to bring in the bill on mandatory minimum sentencing for drug crimes as a bill that will be tough on organized crime and big traffickers. We heard the Minister of Justice say that again today, as he has so many times.

The reality is that mandatory minimums do not deter organized crime. Instead, they almost exclusively affect small dealers, street level traffickers and non-violent offenders, while leaving the door wide open for organized crime to step in and fill the void created by the sweeps at the lower end. Even the Canadian Justice Department, in its report of 2002, concluded that mandatory minimum sentences were the least effective in relation to drug offences.

The Minister of Justice has never been able to offer a shred of evidence that mandatory minimums are a deterrence, that they work. He was grilled on this in committee the last time the bill went through the House. This is now the third time we have had the bill before us. The minister could not offer any evidence that mandatory minimums were effective or that they would deal with our complex drug issues. All the evidence is to the contrary. The evidence indicates that the bill would have many harmful effects, including increasing the prison population and changing Canada's drug strategy from a four pillar approach that includes enforcement, prevention, treatment and harm reduction.

• (1300)

We know the Conservatives changed that strategy in 2007. Again, they are totally focused on the proposition that somehow a new bill, a new offence, a stiffer penalty, a mandatory minimum would deal with some of these complex issues.

I have a letter that has three pages of organizations and individual experts who have all studied this legislation, particularly, as it applies to mandatory minimums. They all have come to the same conclusion. There is no evidence that the legislation is warranted and would actually assist our society overall.

I would point out, again, more evidence. The auditor general, when she audited drug enforcement a few years ago when we had a special committee on the non-medical use of drugs, produced a very significant report that called for an increased emphasis on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. What became clear was something like 73% of federal funds were being spent on enforcement, 14% on treatment, 7% on research, 2.6% on prevention and 2.6% on harm reduction.

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Even the auditor general, from a very neutral, independent standpoint, came to the conclusion that the so-called drug strategy was not working, that it was not effective and that it could not be shown to be transparent or actually assisting in terms of drug issues in local communities.

The drug bill, in particular, which the Conservatives tried to get through the Senate and through the House, is taking Canada in a completely wrong direction. It is a direction that is very expensive, it will have no effect on drug use itself and it will only increase the prison population, creating a new set of overpopulation that with it will come health and safety concerns and problems that then will manifest themselves within the prison system. Anybody who does not understand that, as I said at the beginning, is simply fooling themselves and is blind to the reality and the evidence that is now before us.

The Conservative government changed the drug strategy in 2007. As result, we have now been down this path similar to the U.S. experience. The Americans have begun to understand that even the most right-wing conservatives, as quoted by my colleague, in the U.S. recognize the massive failure of the course of incarcerating people, of relying on an enforcement approach and mandatory minimums. Surely, Canada has lessons to learn from this.

I want to say this loud and clear, and I am very glad that all my colleagues are speaking out on the bill. We feel the bill is offensive in the way it puts together nine significant bills that should be dealt with individually. In particular, there is no evidence that the drug bill will work. On the contrary, all the evidence indicates that it will be harmful and costly. It is the wrong direction for our country to take.

• (1305)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to rise in this debate. I listened to the member for Vancouver East's presentation on this and some of her ideas. She spoke about drug crime and some of her concerns she had with the legislation.

We also have drug crime in Winnipeg. We have abuse of certain narcotics such as heroin, for instance.

Other than the fact that she does not think the legislation within this place is the right approach, would she recommend to the citizens of Winnipeg that we perhaps create an InSite facility in downtown Winnipeg and could she comment on that?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I can only say that, to me, it is up to the people of Winnipeg to determine what they see as the solutions to the very difficult questions they are facing in their community. In Vancouver East, when we were dealing with very difficult drug overdoses, it was the local community, including the police, the board of trade, businesses, and health professionals, that determined that a safe facility for people to go to was actually part of the solution.

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No one has ever suggested that such a solution be imposed anywhere else. It is up to the residents of his community to determine what those solutions are. Things that are grown locally and that come from the local experiences are the things that work best.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for an excellent presentation and I wanted to ask her a particular question.

There are nine different areas dealt with in this legislation, but nowhere does the legislation have anything to say about people with mental illnesses in prisons. We know that up to 20% of youth in prisons today have a mental illness, up to 29% of women in prisons today have a mental illness and 50% of Canadian offenders report substance abuse as a cause for their offence. Existing information tells us that most people who go to prison, especially those with mental illness, show extreme depression and hopelessness before they go into prison.

Does the member have a comment on the fact that we are actually warehousing the mentally ill in prisons today? This trend is going to increase with this kind of legislation, yet there is nothing to be done to deal with this medical problem and to find an appropriate way of dealing with it in prisons.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Centre for her observations, which I believe are entirely correct.

I think there is an attitude from the government that if it makes people invisible by stuffing them into overcrowded facilities, somehow invisibility means that it has dealt with the problem. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Many alarming reports show us that the situation and conditions in terms of safety, health, and lack of rehabilitation in a prison system have a cumulative effect, so when these bills are passed and we just blindly increase the prison population without knowing the impacts, we are actually creating a worse problem than we had in the beginning.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question based on a real experience this past weekend, when I participated in a walk of citizens in my riding against drunk driving.

In one case I met with two families who had tragically lost their two sons just over a year ago when a drunk driver ran into them. It was a youth offender, and these people were advocating for stiffer penalties for such a crime, a crime that had caused the deaths of their 16- and 17-year-old children.

Second, I met with the mother of a son who had been brutally beaten to the point of now being severely mentally disabled. This lady came up to me and thanked me for this crime bill. Her son now has lifetime disabilities and will never work and never function, and she said it was time for the people who perpetrated this on him not to get off scot-free for doing that.

What is the member's reaction to those kinds of victims in this country?

• (1310)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I think we all have great sympathy for people who have gone through that experience, but one

of the problems that comes from the Conservatives with this debate is the implication that somehow there are not any laws in existence, that somehow we are creating laws and that without this there is mayhem.

The fact is that we already have a very tough Criminal Code. We have a judicial system that allows discretion for judges to take into account individual situations. One of the problems with these bills is that they remove that discretion, so in actual fact we are making the system less responsive and less effective.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be in the House today to talk about the important changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act that are included in the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

Since coming to power in 2006, our government has been working hard to ensure that Canadians can feel safe and secure in their communities. A key part of this ongoing work has focused on improvements to our youth criminal justice system. In particular, the government is taking action to strengthen the ways in which the system deals with serious, repeat and violent young offenders. My remarks today will focus on some of the key proposals that address those concerns.

First, the proposed amendments ensure that protection of society remains a key goal of the youth criminal justice system.

While the principles of the youth criminal justice system currently identify the long-term protection of the public as an objective of the act, the bill before us would make it clear that the youth criminal justice system is intended to protect the public by holding young offenders accountable, by promoting their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, and by preventing crime by addressing the circumstances underlying their offending behaviour.

A youth justice system that fails to protect society fails Canadians. Canadians have the right to be protected from crime, including youth crime, and the Government of Canada is committed to achieving that goal.

During our committee hearings on the former Bill C-4, some witnesses expressed the view that this change to the principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act would move us toward a more punitive youth justice system and away from a system that emphasizes rehabilitation and reintegration.

In fact, if members look at the full statement of principles in the amendment, it is clear that this is simply not the case. Indeed, the proposed amendment specifically states that rehabilitation, reintegration and crime prevention are key to the protection of society.

Furthermore, the bill also proposes amending the principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act by adding a fundamental principle of justice already articulated by the Supreme Court of Canada, namely that the youth criminal justice system must be based on the principle of diminished moral blameworthiness or diminished culpability.

Therefore, the proposed changes to the principles reflect a balanced approach that, together with the preservation of the existing principles, will guide those working within the youth criminal justice system to respond to youth in a more effective manner.

The proposed amendments also make important changes to the principles of sentencing in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The amendments add specific deterrence and denunciation as principles to guide a judge in sentencing young offenders. Right now, deterrence and denunciation are not even included as objectives in youth sentencing decisions, even though many Canadians believe that young offenders' sentences should be designed to deter further offending and to send a message to that particular young offender before the court that criminal behaviour is simply not acceptable.

However, the proposed amendment would also make it very clear that a sentence must still be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and to the degree of responsibility of the young person for that offence. That means, for example, that judges will not be able to give a young offender an extra-long sentence just to send a message to other youth that the unlawful behaviour was wrong.

Once again, in my view these changes, taken together with the existing principles of sentencing in the Youth Criminal Justice Act, represent a balanced approach that will allow courts to respond to youth crime in an appropriate and effective way.

The package of reforms also includes several significant changes to the definition sections of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The amended act would define "serious offence" as any indictable offence that carries a maximum penalty in the Criminal Code or in another act of Parliament of five years or more.

This definition includes both property offences, such as auto theft and theft over \$5,000, and violent offences, such as common assault, sexual assault and robbery.

• (1315)

Right now there is no definition of "serious offence" in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. This new definition will have important implications for pretrial detention, and I will touch on them in a few moments.

The amendments also expand the meaning of "violent offence" under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The current scope of "violent offence" under the act was interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada as including offences in which a young offender causes or attempts to cause or threatens to cause bodily harm, but not to include other offences that endanger someone's life or safety. An example is dangerous driving.

The proposed definition includes offences in which a young person actually endangers the life or safety of another person by creating the substantial likelihood of causing bodily harm. This new definition would have application in a number of areas, including the imposition of custodial sentences and the lifting of publication bans.

The proposed amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act modify the restrictions on the use of custody as a youth sentencing measure. Apart from exceptional cases, currently a court cannot

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impose a custodial sentence on a young offender unless that young offender has committed a violent offence, failed to comply with previous non-custodial sentences, or committed an indictable offence for which an adult would be liable to imprisonment for a term of more than two years, and also has a history that demonstrates a pattern of findings of guilt.

The proposed amendment pertains to the third circumstance, namely to cases in which a young offender has committed a non-violent indictable offence for which an adult is liable to more than two years in prison. The amendment would simply allow and give discretion to a judge to impose a custodial sentence in such a case if the youth's history demonstrated a pattern of findings of guilt or of extrajudicial sanctions or both.

This means that custody could be an option for a young offender who has been found guilty of a non-violent offence and who has in the past engaged in criminal behaviour for which the youth has admitted responsibility, but which was dealt with through extrajudicial sanctions. This simply allows the court to take the youth's full history into account to help determine the appropriate sentence.

The bill also creates a requirement that records be kept when extrajudicial measures are used by law enforcement, which will make it easier to find patterns of repeated reoffending that the police and others may take into account in deciding on appropriate interventions, such as whether to use another extrajudicial measure or proceed through the courts.

Changes to the publication provisions in the Youth Criminal Justice Act are also contained in this package of reforms. Currently the identity of a young offender is protected, and identifying information can be published only in limited circumstances; for example, the publication ban is automatically lifted if a youth receives an adult sentence. The publication ban could also be lifted by the judge in cases in which a youth has received a youth sentence for an offence that falls within a very narrow category of the most serious violent offences.

The new law requires judges simply to consider lifting publication bans whenever a youth sentence is imposed on a youth found guilty of a violent offence. The publication ban could be lifted, but only if the judge finds that the young person poses a significant risk of committing another violent offence and only if the lifting of the ban is necessary to protect the public. It will always be up to the prosecution to convince the judge that lifting the ban is necessary.

As the title of the bill indicates, the amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act contained in the safe streets and communities act would make violent and repeat young offenders more accountable for their actions and better protect Canadians. This is what Canadians expect of their youth justice system, and it is an important priority for our government.

Government Orders

I ask all members of the House to join together with me and the government to focus on the concerns common to all Canadians.

• (1320)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what worries me most about my colleague's speech is that he fails to take note of or at least recognize or acknowledge that we have 30 years of empirical evidence to draw from as testimony to the predictable consequences and outcomes of the course of action that the government is taking.

I am making reference to the tough on crime initiative of the United States, which American legislators are now saying has been a catastrophic failure and not only a catastrophic failure but it is bankrupting the 50 states. They have been building prisons and stacking up prisoners like cordwood for the last 30 years, to the point where they had to privatize the prison system, bringing in Halliburton to provide jails and to feed the prisoners, and bankrupting states. The streets are no safer.

Is my colleague aware of the recent trend in the United States that has stopped building more prisons, stopped mandatory minimum sentences, and is putting the money that is saved into crime prevention, especially in the context of drug rehabilitation and in dealing with the mentally ill rather than locking them up, giving them treatment? Prevention rather than punishment is the trend.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his comments. I hope he was listening closely to my remarks.

The member will see in them an acknowledgement by me that in fact rehabilitation, reintegration and prevention are important measures. I know, because I have spoken to our justice minister, that those are also important measures to our government. In fact, our justice minister often remarks to me that we are the only party that actually has a balanced program which does take those things into account.

With regard to the American experience, I really hope that my friend has an opportunity to study our legislation because he will see it is entirely dissimilar to what the Americans have been doing for the last 30 years. Our legislation is targeted, focused only on the worst cases, the worst offences, and with nowhere near the kinds of consequences, in terms of three strikes and you are out, and lengthy imprisonments that the Americans have experienced.

He will see that what we are doing is really quite dissimilar from what the Americans have done.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government claims to want to provide good public administration, but despite all the bad experiences in the world, it insists on maintaining a partisan vision of its public administration. The government does not seem to realize that sending more people to prison in a questionable manner, while cutting preventive and alternative methods, inevitably comes with significant prison costs.

Can the hon. member for Kitchener Centre tell us whether he is in favour of increasing prison costs for the provinces?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to take issue with a comment made by my friend, although I will say:

[Translation]

I want to thank him very much for his question.

[English]

What he said, as I heard it, was that this legislation proposes to put young offenders or people in custody on doubtful grounds. I can only hope, once again, that the member opposite who posed that question actually takes a minute to look at the legislation. He will see that there is no such thing in this legislation. There is so no such thing as putting people in prison on doubtful grounds. In fact, in many cases all we are simply doing is giving judges the discretion to exercise that option.

I am happy to say that in total, since 2006, our government has succeeded in passing 19 criminal justice reform bills. They have all been solid and, in my opinion, essential in tweaking and improving our criminal justice system.

• (1325)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the omnibus crime bill, Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act. I support the sections of the bill that aim to protect children from dangerous sexual predators.

In fact, I have introduced legislation myself, Bill C-213, that makes it an offence for an adult to communicate with a minor by any electronic means. This bill would close a loophole in the Criminal Code that allows sexual predators to communicate with children by any electronic devices such as cellular phones or even the social media. This legislation would give more tools to the courts to address the issues of child luring and abuse.

These changes to the Criminal Code are long overdue. This legislation was first introduced in 2008 by my predecessor Dawn Black. I brought forward this legislation when I was first elected and I recently reintroduced it in this session. The government has not addressed this loophole in the Criminal Code for years now. The Conservatives want to use it as window dressing for building mega prisons.

The world has changed in three and a half years, with cellphone and Internet use exploding. During these years, the government has left children unprotected. The government should have taken swift action and moved on this bill but has instead included it in a highly controversial omnibus bill which has many problems associated with it.

The people of New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody want effective public safety policies from the government. Coquitlam has one of the lowest police-to-population ratios in British Columbia. The police are constantly being asked to do more with less and this crime omnibus bill will only exacerbate the problem.

If the government were serious about protecting neighbourhoods, then it would ensure that communities like Coquitlam have adequate funding for the RCMP. The federal government has yet to deliver on its 2006 commitment to fund 2,500 new RCMP officers and to sit down with municipalities to review their community policing needs.

I believe we need to focus on crime prevention. My riding has experienced gang violence, a prevalent issue in the lower mainland. We need to increase funding for youth gang prevention programs as well as the number of police officers on the street. We need to prevent kids from getting involved with gangs to begin with.

In my riding we have a very successful youth restorative justice program. One organization, Communities Embracing Restorative Action, has been working in my riding since 1999. It aims to provide a just and meaningful response to crime, rehabilitate people who commit crime and to engage the community. The organization also offers preventive programs, running an empowering youth program in local schools. The program is aimed at crime prevention to give young people tools and information before crime emerges, and to build strong and inclusive relationships at an early age. The program has grown to be successful and is an excellent alternative for working with our youth.

We also need to increase support to those suffering from drug addiction and mental health problems. This legislation would increase the overrepresentation of offenders with mental health and addiction problems in our prison system. Our prison system is already strained for resources and resource programs. Currently, only one in five inmates has access to programs for anger management and substance abuse. How will the prison system cope with an influx of inmates needing this treatment?

This is one of the key problems with this crime omnibus bill. It downloads an extra cost and burden to provincial and territorial governments. To date, there has been no analysis nor consultation related to the increased costs for enforcement and prosecution which will be downloaded onto the provinces and territories.

Paula Mallea from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives states:

The cost of the [government's] crime agenda will be colossal, and a large part of it (some say most) will be borne by the provinces, who are responsible for implementing whatever the feds pass. So provinces and territories (many of them in elections as we speak) will be expected to pay for additional courts, clerks, prisons, Crown Attorneys, judges, sheriffs, court reporters and so on.

• (1330)

In British Columbia, our court system is already strained. Our prisons are already overcrowded. According to the B.C. government employees' union that represents prison guards in British Columbia, says jails in the province are at 150% to 200% in overcrowded conditions. Also, understaffing and overcrowding is responsible for an increase in attacks on prison guards. The province of British Columbia closed nine prisons in 2003 and made cutbacks to the corrections system.

How are the provinces and territories to deal with an influx of prisoners who are sent to jail on mandatory minimums?

Growing even six marijuana plants would trigger an automatic six month sentence with an extra three months if it is done in a rental unit, or is deemed a public safety hazard. According to Neil Boyd, a criminologist at the Simon Fraser University, this legislation could increase the proportion of marijuana criminals in B.C. jails from less than 5% to around 30%.

Government Orders

Has the government taken this into account? Is this the best use of our resources? Has this been fully costed? Unfortunately, I think the answer is no.

One of the key concerns with this bill is the cost. When the Conservative government came to power in 2006, the federal corrections system cost nearly \$1.6 billion a year. By 2013-14, according to the department's own projections, the cost of our federal penitentiary system will have increased to \$3.147 billion. In 2010-11, more than \$517 million will be spent on prison construction. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the total annual cost per prison cell is about \$260,000, while a new high security cell amounts to about \$600,000.

Aside from the cost associated with actually building prisons, the cost to incarcerate inmates is high. The average cost for a female inmate is about \$343,000 per year. For a male inmate in maximum security the cost is \$223,000 while medium security is \$141,000 year. Even while out on parole the average cost per inmate is \$39,084 per year.

The crime rate continues to decline. The crime severity index, which measures the seriousness of crime, also dropped to its lowest point since the measure became available in 1998. So why is the government putting forward such costly legislation when crime rates continue to drop? Why is the government pursuing tough on crime policies that have failed so miserably in other jurisdictions such as the United States?

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Much of this is the result of mandatory minimums and the so-called war on drugs. It has not made the United States a safer place. In fact, most evidence indicates that it has not deterred crime and could even lead to less safe conditions in prisons and in communities.

Just as the costs are expected to be a large burden on our provinces and territories, the costs have proven to be crippling for the states. For example, Texas has recently moved away from using mandatory minimums because the costs to the state were too high.

The bill is not based on evidence. The government has failed to produce information that its legislation to impose mandatory minimums and lengthen sentences would have any deterrence on crime. The Minister of Justice the other day is quoted as saying, "We're not governing on the basis of the latest statistics".

It has been shown time and again that the government fails to understand the importance of statistics, facts and science. To put forward such costly legislation without having statistics to back it up is inappropriate. To put forward legislation based on failed U.S. policies is shortsighted. We need to be moving forward not backward.

Government Orders

Mandatory minimums remove judicial discretion and this is highly problematic. In some cases, it could lead to judges giving lesser sentences than they otherwise would because they need to rely solely on legislation for sentencing.

According to the Canadian Bar Association, there are concerns with several aspects of the government's proposed omnibus crime bill, including mandatory minimum sentences, an overreliance on incarceration, constraints on judicial discretion to ensure a fair result in each case, and the bill's impact on specific already disadvantaged groups.

While the bill has some parts that I am in favour of, it is only on a case-by-case basis.

● (1335)

My concern is that the government has mixed good legislation in with bad and plans to ram it through all at once. It is ineffective and expensive. I cannot support the bill as it stands.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague across the floor and I hope he has the opportunity to listen again to what he said because a great deal of it did not make sense.

On the one hand, he used statistics from the Parliamentary Budget Officer on the cost of prisons but he certainly did not talk about the real numbers that Corrections Canada provided, which are totally different.

He is talking about crime rates going down and more people going to prison. I can tell members that if people do not commit a crime, they do not go to prison. I do not know where all that comes from.

The member talked about megaprisons. I would like to know where that term came from and how he associates it to this, other than in something in the opposition side where the soft on crime approach is that we should not build prisons.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I think that building more prisons is something the government is focused on. We can easily make a connection with the United States policy where the Americans are building megaprisons. This is a trend toward that direction.

We should be focused more on prevention, putting our resources and focusing on prevention programs for individuals, especially young people, disadvantaged people and those who suffer from mental health problems and substance addictions. We should be addressing those issues and helping people who need that help in order to stay out of prison in the first place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that the member has put on the record. I especially liked the comments put on the record by the member for Mount Royal in terms of why it is that Bill C-10 is so fundamentally flawed, why it is that we need the government to take more of an aggressive approach in dealing with some of the causes of these crimes and why we are not doing enough to prevent crimes from occurring in the first place.

I am sure the member for Vancouver Centre would be aware that the Government of Manitoba has taken the position that the bill does not go far enough. It surprised me, I must say, when it took that position.

Does the member believe that the additional responsibilities that would be given and the financial obligations from the provinces as a result of this legislation are totally unfair? Is he aware of any sort of consultation that has been taking place between the provinces and Ottawa with regard to these costs?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I believe that one of the biggest issues in this omnibus crime bill is the costs. There will be tremendous costs downloaded to our provincial and territorial governments. We are already hearing concerns from the provinces and territories about the bill and with the extent of the bill.

While there are some elements that are good aspects of this bill, the overwhelming majority is not something I can support. This is the wrong direction into which we need to be putting our scant resources.

● (1340)

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague well knows, aboriginals, women and children are overrepresented in our jails. In fact, I have some numbers here. Aboriginal women are overrepresented in maximum security prisons specifically. They make up 46% of federally sentenced women. I wonder if my colleague could speak to the fact that they lack services and rarely get proper legal representation. The government is giving few resources to combat all these things and, in fact, Correctional Services' own statistics say that there has been no significant progress in this in the past 20 years.

I wonder if my colleague could speak to how this bill would not actually targeting the problem.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from my colleague. What is not addressed in this bill is a focus on prevention, a focus resources to those who need it most. That is where there are huge shortcomings in the bill and that is why I cannot support it.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-10, legislation that would further strengthens our government's already impressive track record of keeping our streets and communities safe.

The people of Mississauga South tell me every day, in letters, phone calls, as well as visits to my office, that they want this government to crack down on crime.

I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

The legislation before us today builds on this work which Canadians have given us a strong mandate to continue, the work of that impressive track record.

One very important component of our government's efforts to build safer streets and communities involves ongoing reforms to help ensure the system of corrections in this country actually works to correct offenders. I would therefore like to focus my remarks on this very important area.

I will begin with the victims of crime because, when it comes to our corrections system, they deserve to have their interests and concerns heard and know that their government is listening.

The current act clearly recognizes that victims of crime have an interest in the correctional process and yet victims and their advocates have expressed dissatisfaction with the current law. They have consistently called for improvements that would ensure a stronger voice in the process. This government has heard their concerns. We have listened and now we are acting on those concerns.

As it stands now, victims sometimes travel long distances to attend parole hearings, but if offenders withdraw their participation, the hearing could be cancelled at the last minute. This creates both a financial and emotional burden for victims.

The bill would remove the ability of offenders to cancel their parole hearings less than two weeks in advance, and victims would have the right to ask why the offender has waived that parole hearing. These measures would go a long way to preserving peace of mind for victims.

Bill C-10 would also enshrine in law a victim's right to attend and make statements at parole hearings. In addition, it would enable victims to request relevant information about an offender's time in custody, including reasons for transfer between institutions, or why they have been granted temporary absence and participation in their correctional plan.

Additionally, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act would be amended to expand the information that may be disclosed to victims by CSC and the Parole Board of Canada. This includes providing information on the reason or reasons for offender transfers with, whenever possible, advance notice of transfers to minimum security institutions; disclosing information on offender program participation and any convictions for serious disciplinary offences; and providing guardians and caregivers of dependants of victims who are deceased, ill or otherwise incapacitated with the same information that victims themselves can receive. Such changes would help to ensure that the interests of victims are front and centre.

The second major area of reform relates to the responsibility and accountability of offenders. Additionally, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act would be amended to allow for the establishment of incentive measures designed to promote offender participation in their correctional plan.

A successful transition to the community does not happen by accident or through wishful thinking. It demands that offenders play an active role in their rehabilitation. That is why the bill before the House stresses that rehabilitation is a shared responsibility between offenders and Correctional Service Canada.

Offenders would be expected to respect others, obey the rules and actively participate in fulfilling the goals of their correctional plans. To that end, each correctional plan would set out expectations for behaviour, participation in any programs and fulfilment of any court ordered financial obligations.

The third area of reform relates to the management of offenders and their re-integration into the community. In short, we need to do better so that we better protect law-abiding Canadians in all conditional release decisions. To that end, this legislation proposes to give police the power to arrest without warrant any offender who appears to be in breach of his or her release conditions.

Government Orders

● (1345)

Finally, the bill would automatically suspend the parole or statutory release of offenders who receive a new custodial sentence.

In the final area of reform, Bill C-10 would modernize the system of discipline in federal penitentiaries. Specifically, it would create in law new penalties for breaking rules, such as disrespectful, intimidating or assaultive behaviour, including throwing bodily substances. It would also restrict visits for inmates who have been segregated for serious disciplinary offences.

As we have heard, Bill C-10 proposes several fundamental reforms to the corrections and conditional release system to help ensure that our correctional system is actually correcting offenders.

The amendments that our Conservative government is proposing would enhance offender responsibility and accountability and strengthen the management of offenders during their incarceration and conditional release. These amendments would also modernize the system of disciplinary sanctions in federal correctional facilities and give victims the opportunity to request more information about the offender who has harmed them. All in all, the amendments would reinforce and build on the work already under way to strengthen the corrections and conditional release system.

Today we know that many of the offenders arriving in Canada's correctional system also arrive with histories of violent offences. More offenders than ever have gang or organized crime affiliations, and nearly four out of five now arrive at a federal institution with a serious abuse problem. In addition, an increasing number of offenders have serious mental health issues. Such changes in the offender population require a new approach to corrections and conditional release. That is why the government is moving forward with the proposals in Bill C-10.

The reforms being proposed would better serve victims by increasing the information that may be shared with them and guaranteeing their right to be heard at parole hearings. The proposed reforms would also help ensure that offenders are more accountable for their actions and so that their rehabilitation will be more effective.

These measures would also modernize the disciplinary system for inmates.

Further controls for offenders under community supervision are also being introduced.

I urge all members of the House to give their unconditional support for the bill for the sake of offenders who must take more responsibility for a successful transition into the community. I urge all hon. members to support Bill C-10 for the sake of crime victims who deserve a greater voice in the correctional system. I urge them to support the legislation before us today for the sake of corrections officers who have a right to a safe work environment.

Points of Order

I urge all hon. members to support this legislation for the sake of all Canadians. The protection of society is our top priority. Canadians deserve to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. Victims deserve to be treated with respect, as do the guards in our institutions. Offenders must be prepared to take more responsibility for their conduct and pay the price if they break the rules.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**PRESS RELEASE**

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday, I put out a non-partisan press release encouraging every eligible voter to vote, while emphasizing that their vote matters in the provincial election in Ontario. There was certainly no intent on my part to have an impact on the outcome of the provincial election or, for that matter, to be anything other than an appropriate use of parliamentary resources. I realize it could be interpreted otherwise.

As parliamentarians, it is our responsibility to ensure that we follow the letter and the spirit of the rules, and that is something I take very seriously in my job. To that end, I apologize for that to you, Mr. Speaker.

● (1350)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House notes the parliamentary secretary's intervention.

* * *

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would like to respond to a quote from the Canadian Bar Association with respect to the legislation:

The Bill's approach is contrary to what is known to lead to a safer society.

The CBA believes that the Bill will make already serious criminal justice system problems much worse, with huge resource implications.

Perhaps the hon. member could comment on why that is so wrong.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, the government fundamentally disagrees that being tough on crime will not work to deter criminals. This is a very basic step in the process. I wonder whether the member opposite truly believes that allowing offenders to take more responsibility for their incarceration and for their conditional release is a good idea.

These laws are meant to improve on what currently exists, but more importantly, we are talking about protecting victims of crime. That is what Bill C-10 really wants to do. We are protecting victims of crime by putting in place tougher sentences.

I am wondering which part of this he does not agree with. Does he not want to protect the guards in the prisons? Does he not want to make their working conditions safer? These are the kinds of things that amending the Corrections and Conditional Release Act will do. I urge him to support these changes.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my colleague from Mississauga South would agree that if longer prison sentences in and of themselves meant safer streets, the United States would have the safest streets in the world. The Americans lock up people at a higher rate than any other country. Even they have seen the folly in their ways. Would she not concede that the United States has now confessed that it was wrong and changed its practices and is dedicating more of the money it is saving by not building more prisons to prevention and substance abuse programs and treatment and rehabilitation? The U.S. is now enjoying a reduction.

Why are we borrowing billions and billions of dollars to build more prisons when we know full well it will not make our streets any safer? Is this not just a cheap pandering to the Conservatives' voting base?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, in fact, these measures address specific deterrents. When a criminal is in jail, the victim can no longer be victimized. That is whom we care about. We care about the victims. That is whom Canadians care about. That is why we are preventing sexual exploitation of foreign nationals. That is why we are eliminating pardons for serious criminal acts. That is why we are ensuring that young offenders are given the opportunity to properly be rehabilitated. If they have done the crime they should also serve the time as adults if necessary. We are giving the courts the options to deal with the crime without having to worry about how many spots there are in jail.

We are doing the right thing because—

● (1355)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Questions and comments. We have time for one quick question and a brief response. The hon. member for Winnipeg South.

[English]

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have run in various elections going back to 2004. When I was on the campaign trail, with all the parties that are represented here in the House, I remember their referring to our crime measures in general as being needed. Whenever I was at a debate with candidates, they would talk about how we needed to get tough on criminals. Yet when they return to this place they revert to their leftist philosophy on crime, which unfortunately does not work. Canadians have spoken on it, and I am sure the member heard the same thing on the campaign trail.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I do hear the same thing from my constituents in Mississauga South. They are concerned about crime. They are concerned about their children. They want safe streets and safe communities. That is what we are doing here. We are making sure that offenders serve the time and that when they are released, they are given the proper opportunities for rehabilitation.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-10.

As hon. members know, Bill C-10 contains provisions from various bills that were introduced in the previous Parliament, but unfortunately were blocked by the opposition.

The focus of my remarks today will be on the amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The proposed changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act reflect what we as parliamentarians have been hearing from our constituents. They are concerned about the threat posed by violent young offenders as well as by youth who may commit non-violent offences but who appear to be spiralling out of control towards more and more dangerous and harmful behaviour. In talking to fellow Canadians, we have found that they can lose faith in the youth criminal justice system when sentences given to violent and repeat young offenders do not make these youth accountable for their actions.

The package of Youth Criminal Justice Act amendments also responds to issues raised during cross-country consultations, to key decisions of the courts, to concerns raised by the provinces and territories, and to the positions put forward by the many witnesses who appeared before the justice committee during its study of former Bill C-4.

The reforms reflect the widely held view that while the Youth Criminal Justice Act is working fairly well in dealing with the majority of youth who commit crimes, there are concerns about the small number of youth who commit serious repeat or violent offences.

The proposed amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act are found in part 4, clauses 167 through 204, of the comprehensive Safe Streets and Communities Act. With a few exceptions, the proposed changes are the same as the changes that were proposed in former Bill C-4, also known as Sébastien's law.

Bill C-4 was introduced in the House of Commons on March 16, 2010 and was before the House of Commons justice and human rights committee, of which I am a member, when Parliament was dissolved prior to the May 2011 election.

As I have indicated, most of the Youth Criminal Justice Act provisions in the bill now before us were included in former Bill C-4. However, after Bill C-4 was introduced in Parliament, a number of provincial attorneys general expressed concerns about the proposed amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act provisions dealing specifically with pretrial detention, deferred custody and supervision orders, and adult sentencing.

These concerns were raised directly with the Minister of Justice and were brought before the justice committee. The government has

listened carefully to these and other concerns, and has responded by making the appropriate changes to the previous legislation.

As my colleague, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, has already given the House a thoughtful and thorough description of the provisions that were found in former Bill C-4, I will specifically discuss the minor changes that are included in this version of the bill.

With respect to pretrial detention, the government recognizes that the current Youth Criminal Justice Act provisions are complex, leading to a varied application of the provisions by the courts.

Bill C-4 proposes a much more straightforward approach to pretrial detention that would have allowed courts to detain a youth awaiting trial if the youth was charged with a serious offence and the court found a substantial likelihood that, if released, the youth would either not appear in court when required to do so or would commit a serious offence while awaiting trial.

The provinces' primary concern with the approach of Bill C-4 was that pretrial detention would be available for youth charged with an offence that was not deemed to be a serious offence. They felt that this could prevent detention of a youth who, although currently charged with a non-serious offence, had a prior history of charges or offending and appeared to be spiralling out of control and thus was posing a risk to public safety.

I will be happy to—

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The member will have six minutes remaining for his speech when the House next considers this bill.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

GEORGETTE TOUTANT AND ÉDOUARD BEAUDOIN

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a very special year for Georgette Toutant and Édouard Beaudoin. They are both celebrating their 100th birthdays and their 78th wedding anniversary as well.

This couple have lived an extraordinary life. They owned a dairy farm for 48 years, raised meat animals for 15 years and thus spent 63 years working in agriculture. They remained on their farm until they were 92 years old. They have 7 children, 14 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

A grand thanksgiving mass was held at the church in their home parish of Gentilly on July 24 to give thanks and celebrate this special birthday.

The 100-year-old husband and wife will celebrate their 78th wedding anniversary on October 25. The community of Gentilly is proud of this couple who are a unique part of the history of the community, Quebec and Canada.

Statements by Members

Congratulations. May you enjoy many more years of happiness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate five high school students from Swan Valley Regional Secondary School in my constituency for their first place achievement in the 2011 Canon Envirothon competition.

Team members were: Nyla Burnside, Matt Forbes, Teagan Markin, Breanna Anderson and Eddie Shao. Their advisers were: Rick Wowchuk, Shawn Stankewich and Alex Verbo.

They defeated 53 teams from across North America. They are the very first Canadian team to win this prestigious award for their exceptional knowledge of the environment.

Swan River is an agricultural, forestry and tourism dependent community. The residents of Swan River Valley, as exemplified by the extraordinary achievements of their Envirothon team, have an innate and practical understanding of sustainable development and the wise use of natural resources. This understanding is common throughout rural Canada.

By winning the Envirothon award, these students have demonstrated the relationship they have with their environment. These young people will surely be the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IN THE RIDING OF ROSEMONT—LA PETITE-PATRIE

Mr. Alexandre Boulrice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, whose head office is in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. This is a good opportunity to commend the association's excellent work and the determination of its founder and director, Luciana Soave, herself an immigrant and mother of a child with a disability. Her organization helps all immigrants and people with disabilities by offering them services daily and fighting for their rights.

Furthermore, public, community-supported markets are being developed in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, which is already well known for the Jean-Talon market. One such example is Festi Marché, which makes fresh fruits and vegetables affordable for people on low incomes. Organized by NA Rive, a literacy centre, this market was held last weekend in a school yard. A massive picnic was also held on Shamrock Street, organized by community organizations such as SODER and by the merchants of Little Italy. For the third consecutive year, a non-profit organization coordinated a market for small-scale producers at Technopôle Angus, in the eastern part of the riding. These are just a few of the local initiatives meant to ensure healthy eating habits and food security for our constituents.

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe. That means locking up dangerous and repeat offenders, not releasing them early just to save a buck.

Our government is continuing with the planned expansion of our prisons within existing budgets. We will be creating 2,700 new spaces over the next several years.

Canadians have had enough of a justice system that releases convicted dangerous criminals before they are ready.

Our Conservative government has already taken strong action, including ending early parole for drug dealers and fraudsters and ending the so-called faint hope clause that allows murderers out early. There is still more to do. That is why we will move forward quickly with legislation that was shamefully opposed by the NDP and the Liberals in the last Parliament.

On this side of the House we take our responsibility to build stronger, safer communities across Canada very seriously. I call on the NDP and the Liberals to do the same.

* * *

• (1405)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the past 10 months have been a time of historic change for millions living in places like Yemen, Egypt and Libya.

Starting in Tunisia and sweeping across the Arab world, the winds of change have toppled governments and altered social structures in ways that most of us could never have foreseen. But inasmuch as some things have changed, much has not. In places like Syria, human rights are regularly violated by the state, particularly for those practising Christianity.

Canada is known for its religious tolerance and human rights protections, and because of this, many persecuted souls have already completed their paperwork to make a new life for themselves here in Canada. In many cases, security and health checks have already occurred and all that remains is approval from the minister and the department.

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has it within his power to address this problem and to prevent further abuses from befalling these desperate people. So I ask, why has he not done so?

JERUSALEM

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past summer I visited the death camps at Majdanek and Auschwitz. I saw young people weeping before mounds of human ashes, shoes of victims, mass graves and monstrous crematoria.

Sadly, the threat to the Jewish people is still with us today. It is clear in the determination of those sworn to destroy the collective Jew, the Jewish state.

The world needs a strong Israel. Israel needs secure borders and neighbours who recognize the state and choose peace.

There are those who advocate dividing Jerusalem, separating the “Old City”, historic Jerusalem, from the Jewish state, leaving a state without a soul.

The recent Basel Declaration highlights the San Remo commitment of 1920, the Mandate for Palestine approved by the League of Nations in 1922, solemn commitments that gave the legal foundation for the modern state of Israel, including Jerusalem.

In the pursuit of justice and peace in the Middle East, I urge all nations to handle Jerusalem carefully. The stakes are high; the cost of failure will impact every nation.

* * *

[Translation]

MYSTERY NOVEL AWARDS

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years a yearly gala for the Prix du roman policier has been held in the municipality of Saint-Pacôme, in Kamouraska. Well-known mystery novelists have passed through Saint-Pacôme, including Patrick Sénécal and Chrystine Brouillet. The 2011 awards were presented on Saturday, September 24.

I would like to quote this year's recipient, Martin Michaud, who won for his novel *La chorale du diable*. He said, “The Prix Saint-Pacôme du roman policier plays a huge role in promoting...Quebec culture...a vital part of the Canadian identity.”

I would like to pay tribute to the volunteers and bibliophiles who have succeeded in making this a worthy national event while still maintaining its local roots. I would also like to pay tribute to the elected municipal officials who promote this gala.

In conclusion, I congratulate the winners in the category for junior short story: Flavie Gauthier-Chamard from L'Islet, Catherine Girard from Saint-Prime, and Ève Gaumond from Cacouna.

The people of Saint-Pacôme can be very proud of this event.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN VALUES

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege for me to stand in this place today to thank the people of Willowdale for the trust they have placed in me to represent them in the House.

Statements by Members

I would also like to thank my wife, Deborah, and my daughter, Elysia, for their support and understanding.

I am honoured to represent a riding such as Willowdale, which is rich in culture and diversity. I believe the diversity provides us our strength as Canadians.

When I became a Canadian citizen, over 35 years ago, I was moved by the words of the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker in his definition of a “Canadian”. He said:

I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

These words from our former prime minister describe the Canadian values that we all hold and that we all, in this place, must defend.

* * *

CANCER

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, my thoughts are with two friends back in Edmonton, who are inspiring literally thousands of people as they each battle aggressive forms of cancer.

Calvin Kuhn and Kristen Fersovitch are 44 and 28, respectively, both married, with young children. In Kristen's case, her three kids are all under four years of age.

In the face of unexpected and considerable adversity, both Calvin and Kristen are models of faith and courage. Invariably, those who visit them with a mind to cheer them up come away, themselves, immeasurably more encouraged. It is impossible to spend time with either of them and not leave with a renewed awareness of the purpose and the people, in your own life.

Calvin and Kristen are daily living out the words of the apostle Paul, who counselled the Thessalonians to:

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

May they know that we are inspired by their joy, united with them in prayer and ever thankful for the remarkable model of faith in the most heart-wrenching of circumstances.

* * *

● (1410)

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives cancelled the long-form census, we knew that they were abandoning evidence-based decision making in favour of implementing their narrowly partisan agenda.

The proof was in the pudding last week, when they introduced the omnibus crime bill.

Despite a well-documented 20 year decline in the crime rate and an acknowledgement by even U.S. Republicans that increased incarceration has done nothing to reduce recidivism, the Conservatives are ploughing ahead with mandatory minimum sentences and megajails. All evidence be damned.

Statements by Members

Regrettably, the government is adopting the same ostrich-like approach to dealing with the current economic turmoil. The Prime Minister cannot just stick his head in the sand and ignore the fact that 1.4 million Canadians are out of work, that the unemployment rate for students was a staggering 17% this summer, that Moody's is reporting record levels of household debt and that every senior economist is warning of another deep recession.

Canadians need, and deserve, their government's support. Glibly suggesting that we are in a relatively stronger position than countries like Greece is an insult to the hard-working Canadians and seniors who are worried about making ends meet.

The time is now for the government to finally acknowledge the legitimate concerns of Canadians, act on the evidence and present a credible plan to safeguard Canadian jobs and our economy.

* * *

CHINESE CANADIANS

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding an issue of great importance to the Chinese community in Vancouver south and across Canada.

Earlier this year the CBC reported that many leaders in Canada's cultural communities had called upon the Liberal Party to fire its current outreach leader after he made objectionable and discriminatory statements.

Chinese media has recently reported that, after the story appeared on the CBC, the Liberal multiculturalism critic called the leader in the Chinese community in Toronto and said, "I'm glad you've learned to write English."

It is deeply offensive to imply that Canadian citizens of Chinese origin cannot speak or write English. The Liberal Party should be ashamed of itself. When will it learn to respect Chinese Canadians and the important contributions we have made to this great country and not insult hundreds of thousands of us by mocking our English?

* * *

[Translation]

RIDING OF COMPTON—STANSTEAD

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first speech here in the House, I would like to sincerely thank the people of Compton—Stanstead for their courage in voting for change.

Having been elected, I vowed to work for everyone in my riding, regardless of their allegiance and their beliefs. Over the next four years, I will try to help this government, which was elected by only 39% of Canadians, to see its social and economic policies more clearly in order to guarantee a more prosperous and fair future for all Canadians.

I would also like to congratulate the organizers of the Virée gourmande, or gourmet tour, that was held on September 24 and 25 as part of the Comptonales festival. The goal of this agro-food event was to highlight the quality and contributions of the region's farmers, whose products are the pride of the region. Whether at the Ferland orchard, BioBon, the Tremblay winery, Domaine Ives Hill or the Fromagerie La Station, just to name a few, the determination—

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Calgary East.

* * *

ZAMBIA

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is some good news coming from Africa. Canada congratulates President Michael Sata on his election as Zambia's new leader. We also applaud all candidates and the Zambian people on their role in bringing about a peaceful political transition through the ballot box.

We would also like to congratulate the out-going president, President Banda, who has accepted the will of the Zambian people and has peacefully transitioned power to the newly elected president. This is another example of Africa's drive towards building stronger democratic institutions and principles on the continent.

Zambia remains a key partner for Canada. Canada contributed to the Zambian electoral process through the United Nations and the Commonwealth. Two Canadian officials took part in the European Union's election observation mission.

Our best wishes to the Zambian people.

* * *

●(1415)

WORLD TOURISM DAY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Tourism Day.

[Translation]

Today we have an opportunity to celebrate the beauty that makes our country an attractive destination.

[English]

Canadians could spend a lifetime travelling and experiencing different sceneries, cultures and traditions, without ever stepping foot outside Canada. Generations of Canadians have sewn our flag on their backpacks and cultivated respect abroad.

[Translation]

However, the way we are perceived in the world is changing and we must call on our government to do everything it can to restore our precious reputation.

Canada must raise its profile again in the eyes of the international public by accepting South Korea's invitation to Expo 2012.

[English]

We must reinstate the GST rebate for travellers, lower uncompetitive airport rents, taxes and fees and reconsider the new visa requirements that have deterred international visitors to support our important tourism businesses.

[Translation]

I encourage all Canadians to continue to enjoy the beauty of our country.

* * *

WAR MEMORIALS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our cenotaphs and monuments are powerful reminders of the sacrifices made by generations of Canadians. They are symbolic places where people can gather in memory of our fellow Canadians, our loved ones and family members, who served our country in the name of peace and the freedom we all enjoy today.

Unfortunately, this morning, we learned that a war memorial in Girouard Park in Montreal had been vandalized. We have an obligation to preserve and respect memorials in tribute to the service and sacrifices of our men and women in uniform.

I commend Sergeant Jones who notified the police about this vandalism and I hope the guilty parties will be held accountable for the seriousness of their mischief.

* * *

WANGARI MAATHAI

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that I learned of the death yesterday of Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

An advocate for environmental protection, democracy and women's rights in Africa, this great lady from Kenya was able to turn words into action all her life.

Ms. Maathai established the Green Belt Movement, which planted 30 million trees in order to combat soil erosion.

She was also the co-chair of the Congo Basin Forest Fund, established to protect the second largest rainforest in the world, which plays an important role in the fight against climate change.

Ms. Maathai believed that the future of the human race is inextricably tied to respect for and the preservation of our environment, and that it is possible to protect forests and pursue sustainable economic development at the same time.

I invite the House to salute and pay tribute to the memory of an exemplary pioneer who was known as “the woman who planted trees”.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today the interim leader of the third party called the safe streets and communities act “dumb on crime”. Dumb on crime? This is from the same party whose former public safety critic said that its primary public safety concern was inmate morale. Sadly, out of touch statements like this are not surprising from the Liberals.

The safe streets and communities act is reasonable, tough and it is what Canadians gave us a mandate to do. For example, it stops those

Oral Questions

who have committed sexual offences against children from getting pardons.

We believe that often while a criminal's jail term may end, the suffering caused to his or her victims will last a lifetime. Canadians have been clear. It is unacceptable to ever forget the harm that child molesters have caused their victims.

I call on the Liberals to finally put the rights of law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of convicted criminals and support the safe streets and communities act.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his Guide for Ministers and Ministers of State, the Prime Minister says, and I quote:

As a Minister, you are individually accountable to Parliament for the discharge of all responsibilities vested in you. You must answer all questions pertaining to your areas of responsibility...

Can the Prime Minister tell us what happens when his ministers do not follow his guide?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has established rules and these rules are enforced. I think that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about a specific situation. The minister responsible has answered questions a number of times in the House of Commons.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has not taken any action in the face of the coming economic crisis. Since we returned, we have not seen any initiatives or any action plan. The only bill introduced has nothing to do with the economy, unless the Prime Minister is telling us that more prisons are the key to the recovery. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are meeting with the Governor of the Bank of Canada today.

Will we have a job plan tomorrow?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is continuing with a plan that has been a big success. That is why Canada has created many more jobs than the vast majority of industrialized countries. Obviously, we reject the NDP's proposals to increase taxes and shut down key industries in the Canadian economy. Such proposals would kill employment and this government will never agree to those kinds of NDP proposals.

[English]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the consensus among economists and business gurus is that the Canadian economy will slow down. We are facing another recession.

Oral Questions

The chief economist for BMO Nesbitt Burns compares the Prime Minister to President Hoover, who brought on the Great Depression by responding, like this government, with austerity measures.

Why will the Prime Minister not bring forward a job creation plan instead?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's plans are oriented toward job creation, which is why Canada has one of the best job creation records in the entire industrialized world. That is the path we will continue to pursue.

We seek, obviously, any useful ideas from the opposition on how we can improve Canada's performance, but we will tell you that what they have proposed lately, raising taxes and shutting down key industries, are not proposals that will create jobs and not proposals that this government will ever accept.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' failure to act has proven to be an economic disaster for young workers. Today there are 110,000 fewer jobs for young people than before the recession, and the unemployment rate is over 14%, not counting the thousands of young people who abandoned the labour market and are now on social assistance or living on the street. Canada cannot deprive itself of its talented youth.

Where is the Conservatives' plan to put our young people back to work?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the second phase of Canada's economic action plan there is a hiring credit for the 525,000 small businesses in Canada. I hope that the official opposition will support these measures to help job creation in Canada.

We remain focused on the economy and job growth, and I welcome any useful suggestions the member opposite has.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen just how out of touch the government is. Conservatives are boasting about precarious jobs, part-time jobs, jobs that pay just half of what they did before the recession because of Conservative economic mismanagement.

Canada has lost too many good, high-skilled, highly paid manufacturing jobs. TD Bank says these workers, if they can find work, are now paid an average of \$10,000 less a year.

Where is the Conservative plan to create good jobs. Where is the jobs plan?

● (1425)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the plan is working.

I hear what the member opposite asserts; of course, it is not accurate. We have created about 600,000 net new jobs in the Canadian economy in past couple of years, of which 80% are full-time jobs for Canadians.

This is just the opposite of what the official opposition, the NDP, suggests. What the NDP suggests is a brand new tax increase of \$10 billion on Canadian business to kill jobs in the Canadian economy.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Sherry Cooper of BMO Nesbitt Burns said recently in her newsletter:

We are in danger of repeating the deflationary policies that caused the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression.

She goes on to say:

The misplaced belief that the road to economic prosperity is paved by near-term fiscal tightening, as espoused by our Prime Minister...shows we have learned nothing from Herbert Hoover's response to the Great Depression.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would care to comment on these words from a distinguished economist?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan and Canada's fiscal approach have been praised by observers around the world.

It is not as the leader of the Liberal Party would suggest. In fact, we are running a very expansionary fiscal policy right now, but we are obviously undertaking good management and some modest savings to ensure that as the economy recovers, we will in fact balance our budget and retain our fiscal advantage.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the position I just shared is not my personal view. It is the position clearly expressed by Ms. Cooper, and one that is shared by many other observers who see that this government's activities are doing nothing to help economic growth.

We are not asking for a response for us, but rather for those who are talking about the contraction in the United States and in Europe and the problems that exist in Canada. Why can we not get a different answer from the government?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of analysts who have examined our plan support our approach. It is a very expansionary approach now, with an expansionary fiscal policy. Clearly, we need to save money in order to achieve a balanced budget once the economy begins to grow again. It is crucial that we retain our fiscal advantage.

* * *

[English]

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the President of the Treasury Board, we know very well that he can twitter. We know very well that he can tweet. What we also know is that he cannot get up on his feet.

That is the problem we have with respect to the accountability that we see today from the minister.

The Prime Minister has allowed an absurd situation to be created where the minister who is responsible for the public spending of Canada is not able to respond to an issue that is as clear as clear can be with respect to the activities that went on in Muskoka in preparation for the G8—

The Speaker: Order. The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker this issue has been thoroughly aired.

The Auditor General thoroughly examined all of the spending, and while she suggested some process improvements, we have noted that all of the money has been accounted for and went for projects that were approved.

I would think that the Liberal Party, having run an entire campaign, the worst in its history, on this issue and having been drubbed so badly, would decide that now is probably not the time to keep talking about politics in this way.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the President of the Treasury Board broke the rules, he was also breaking the Prime Minister's own guidelines for cabinet ministers.

When the media starting asking about how he was trying to pass off a \$21 million Olympic hockey arena complete with a swimming pool as a media centre, he intervened with the local mayor and said, "Do not talk to the media until we talk and get our lines converged", to which the mayor responded, "Done. Call me when convenient for you—I will be waiting. Fran loves it when you use that term!"

When will they stop trying to get their story straight and come clean with Canadians?

• (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as has been said in this place many times, the facts have not changed. The issue has been thoroughly aired. The Auditor General has had access to all government information.

It is this kind of muckraking that Canadians rejected in the last election campaign. What they sent all of us here to do is to fight for Canadians, to fight for jobs, to fight for more opportunity, and that is exactly what the government is doing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been 110 days since the Muskoka minister was put in the doghouse, and is that the best the government can come up with?

It is not just the minister's credibility on the line. It is the Prime Minister's, for promoting him and looking the other way when he broke the rules.

If the minister had nothing to hide, why did he intervene with local mayors and tell them to keep their mouths shut until they got their stories straight? This is about ministerial responsibility. It is 110 days and counting. When will the minister take responsibility to the Canadian people?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has looked at this issue. She has made some comments on how process improvements could be made. The government has accepted those recommendations.

The good news is that all 32 of these projects are public infrastructure, whether they be in North Bay or in the Muskoka—Georgian Bay area. They all are public assets that will benefit Canadians for many years to come, and a lot of jobs were created. In addition to these projects, there are 23,000 projects right across the country from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board had a \$20 million, Olympic-size arena built in his riding, using money from the border infrastructure fund. He used his constituency office to distribute government money all over the place. In all likelihood, those responsible for the G8 summit hid information from the Auditor General. As they say in baseball, three strikes and you are out.

Why is the President of the Treasury Board still in cabinet? How is it that he has yet to respond to questions addressed to him here in the House?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts have not changed in this regard.

The member opposite talked about a pool. It was there many years before Muskoka was even announced as the G8 centre. He talked about a hockey rink. That was not even paid for by taxpayers, but through the Government of Ontario.

The member opposite has the right to his own opinion. He does not have the right to his own facts.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the President of the Treasury Board's unofficial spokesperson knows what he is talking about, then he can stand up. Until then, he is not qualified to answer, and the question is not meant for him anyway.

The President of the Treasury Board got a job for his friend at the City of Huntsville. He managed a slush fund with his friends the mayor and the hotel manager. He made funding commitments for government projects in the middle of an election campaign. If the President of the Treasury Board truly believes in ministerial responsibility, he should rise and answer these questions.

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that kind of muckraking is exactly what Canadians rejected at the last election.

What they wanted from their elected representatives was a team of men and women who would fight for jobs, who would fight for more opportunity and more hope, and that is exactly what this government is doing each and every day.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known, yet this country continues to export nearly 200,000 tonnes per year into underdeveloped nations that have virtually no health and safety protocols.

Oral Questions

Instead of shovelling even more corporate welfare into this made-in-Canada epidemic, why does the government not use that money for economic diversification for the asbestos region of Quebec to get it out of this deadly and dying industry?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than 30 years, Canada has been arguing for the safe and controlled use of chrysotile at home and abroad and recent scientific studies clearly confirm that chrysotile can be used safely in a controlled environment.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us try again and see if we get anything new.

This government claims to want to create jobs by supporting the asbestos industry. In reality, it is exporting disease and death to countries that have inadequate labour health and safety standards. This position does not help the communities that are relying on a dying industry. The workers have suffered enough.

What is this government waiting for to show real respect for these people and to develop with them a transition plan to stimulate the economy in that region?

• (1435)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than 30 years, Canada has been arguing for the safe and controlled use of chrysotile at home and abroad, and recent scientific studies clearly confirm that chrysotile can be used safely in a controlled environment.

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more tax giveaways to big oil companies do not create jobs. What does create jobs is infrastructure. Almost 60% of Montrealers are scared to drive because of crumbling concrete. Yesterday, a motion to replace the Champlain Bridge was rejected by the Conservative government. Muskoka got a \$50 million slush fund, but other communities are being denied the basics. Why?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my experience in municipal politics has taught me that municipalities have not in the past had a more committed partner than our Conservative government, led by this Prime Minister.

It was our government that launched the building Canada fund and we will continue to deliver for municipalities.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was talking about an infrastructure plan, like the Champlain Bridge, that right now costs \$30 million a year just to maintain. Cities across Canada need new bridges, new rail lines, sewage treatment plants, and other critically important projects. Investing in infrastructure makes sense.

We have seen the government reward its well-connected friends. When will it protect Canadians by investing in basic infrastructure?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague already knows, we will have a new infrastructure plan after 2014. That is why we trust our infrastructure investments. That is why, in the economic action plan, we invested more than ever in infrastructure. I do not understand why members of the NDP are saying that today and yet they voted against it when we set it up.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that closing the Champlain Bridge would result in annual losses of \$740 million. We know that the bridge must be replaced immediately to ensure the safety of Quebecers and the health of the Canadian economy.

Yesterday, we moved a motion proposing that the Champlain Bridge be replaced. The Conservatives rejected the motion outright. They said no to the economy and to safety.

Why did they reject the motion? When will this government take action and build a new bridge?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while my colleague talks about closing the Champlain Bridge, we are investing \$380 million to ensure that it is safe and will continue to be operational for a long time. While the member moves motions, we are working to ensure that the people of Montreal will have a safe bridge that is in good working order for a long time to come.

* * *

[English]

PRESIDENT OF THE TREASURY BOARD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are these. Parliament approved government spending on border infrastructure, but without lawful authority the Treasury Board President took money from border infrastructure and spent it instead on totally unrelated and unauthorized vanity projects in his own riding.

To cover this up the government misinformed the Auditor General and caused the Auditor General to misinform Parliament. Now the minister hides. This looks like the behaviour of a coward. Will the Treasury Board President finally respond for himself?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I do not think we need to be using words like that.

Oral Questions

I see the Minister of Foreign Affairs rising, so I will allow him to answer, but I would ask members not to use words like I just heard.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member was elected first to the House of Commons in 1974. I would have expected better from him and I will not dignify his question with a response.

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few very simple questions for the President of Treasury Board.

Is he aware that Canadians pay him a bonus of \$75,000 for being a cabinet member, in addition to his MP's salary? Therefore, when will he rise and tell Canadians what he is doing with their money? This conduct shows contempt and a lack of respect for Canadians.

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue has been thoroughly aired. This type of muckraking was rejected by Canadians in the last election campaign.

What Canadians expect of us is to focus on the priorities of Canadian families. That is jobs and the economy. That is providing the important services that the federal government does and that is what this government is going to continue doing.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I personally entered politics to counter the public's perception that politicians are on the take. Regrettably, the member for PARRY SOUND—MUSKOKA is making that extremely difficult.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

There is a long-standing tradition that you cannot do indirectly what you are not allowed to do directly. This is the second time I have heard an indirect way of making an unparliamentary remark, so I think we will move on to the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is out of touch with the reality of Canadians when it comes to the safety of our communities. The Conservatives are playing politics with their omnibus bill on crime but they are not even aware of the cost. The job of parliamentarians is to study and debate bills but the Conservatives refuse to do so.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to work with the NDP to improve the safety of our communities and protect our youth and the rights of victims?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the NDP always objects to spending money when it comes to fighting violent crime. Now when it comes to spending money and threatening jail time for people who do not fill out the census, the

NDP does not have a problem with that, or for farmers who do not like the Wheat Board, or those who do not agree with the long gun registry.

I am proud to be part of a party that knows where money should be spent and that is to go after violent criminals in this country, and he should be supporting that.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard repeatedly, and again just now, about the cost to victims but the government will not produce any evidence of that to this Parliament. That is exactly why we need to continue the study around these claims. The Conservatives are wrong to shut down debate on a bill which we have spent less than four minutes a page debating.

Later today, the NDP will propose fast-tracking parts of this bill; for example, parts that protect children from sexual abuse, that have already passed this Parliament once before and then proceed with a constructive debate on the rest. Will the government agree to that strategy?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we offered to do that before, but then we got a majority and now the NDP has withdrawn that. Now he is saying that we are to leave out the part that goes after drug dealers, the people who bring drugs into this country, the people who sell drugs around schools. Nobody is going to agree to that. Let us get the whole thing passed. That is what Canadians want.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister has been silent on the cost to taxpayers of the government's massive crime bill. This is the same government that, in the last Parliament, refused to provide information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, so he could report to Canadians how much those crime bills would cost.

Are the Conservatives shutting down debate because they do not want Canadians to know the facts? When will the Conservatives come clean and release the real cost of this bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me tell members who have been silent. It is the NDP on the cost to victims in this country. We never hear a question about that coming from the NDP and, to be fair, the Liberals as well. They are in on that.

The Department of Justice estimated the cost of crime in this country is about \$99 billion, of which 83% is borne by victims. If the hon. member is worried about the costs, he should start standing up for victims, just to make a change for the NDP.

Oral Questions

● (1445)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell that side of the House that crime is not a political wedge issue. We believe it is a public safety issue. Once again, Conservatives refuse to answer a direct question. Canadians deserve an answer. Millions of out of work Canadians want their government to invest in job plans, not in doubling the prison budget.

Why does the government hide behind its overused talking points instead of just telling Canadians what the real cost is of this crime bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an investment to better protect Canadians in their homes and make them feel safer in their communities. I appreciate that is not a priority for the NDP. If members want detailed costs, look at the hundreds of pages that we tabled before the committee. That will give many hours of happy reading for NDP members, but I have a feeling that it will not convince them to start standing up for victims and law-abiding Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is certainly focused on jobs and the economy. We are helping to put Canadians back to work as evidenced by the 600,000 new jobs created since July 2009. However, the opposition has another agenda that will destroy Canadian jobs and put our country deeply back into a recession.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please comment on the NDP's latest job-killing energy policy?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Keystone XL pipeline will create over 140,000 good, high paying jobs in Canada. The NDP has decided to stand against these jobs and ally itself with a few environmental extremists who want to shutter all oil sands development. While the NDP continues to betray its job killing agenda, our government will continue to stand with the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who will benefit from this important project.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of the Environment said that the department could lose hundreds of scientists without any effect on basic services. But the government has cut 43% of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's budget.

If assessing and preventing industrial impacts on our environment are not considered basic services, then can the minister explain what he means by "basic services"?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would correct my hon. colleague. The Environmental Assessment Agency has not been cut by 48% and the environment remains a priority of this government even at times of

fiscal restraint. As we are doing across government, we will continue to take a close look at all of our spending over the next year and the results of this examination will be revealed in the budget in the spring.

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HEALTH

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister, despite being asked multiple times, has still not said what he considers to be a core program, so perhaps the Minister of Health would like to answer a question because these programs are not only an environmental concern and surely the Minister of Health knows that the UV index created by Canada has lowered skin cancer rates and saved lives.

For the Minister of Health, will she have the courage to stand up for the health of Canadians?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, our government does recognize the burden of cancer and the effect that it has on lives and the families who live with loved ones who have this horrible disease. That is why our government is supporting cancer control and prevention efforts, working with provincial and territorial governments as well as stakeholders from across Canada to reduce the burden of cancer. We are renewing \$250 million over five years for the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to continue its excellent work.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this out-of-touch government seems more concerned with American unemployment than Canadian jobs. Why else would it ignore environmental concerns on both sides of the border and ship raw bitumen on the Keystone pipeline to the Gulf coast?

We all know it is not just oil sands bitumen that will flow through that pipeline. It is good paying Canadian jobs.

Will this out-of-touch government come clean about what the Keystone pipeline really means to Canadian families: a loss of good paying Canadian jobs?

● (1450)

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP talking about jobs and the oil sands is frankly ridiculous. The NDP's former environment critic called for a moratorium on oil sands development. The Keystone XL pipeline will create over 140,000 jobs and \$600 billion in economic activity. That is what the NDP is prepared to kill.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is not doing anything to protect Canadians' jobs in the Keystone XL project. Thousands of well-paying, quality jobs will be transferred to the United States should the project go ahead. According to a study conducted by Informetrica, tens of thousands of Canadian jobs are at stake.

Why is this government sacrificing thousands of Canadian jobs for the sake of its relationship with the oil companies?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that oil sands development generates over 500,000 jobs and the Keystone project will generate over 140,000 jobs across Canada.

[English]

It is also interesting to note how the NDP does not really understand that there is no refinery capacity in Alberta. There is in Texas. It would cost over \$16 billion to create refineries, rendering it uneconomical.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to defending Canadians against U.S. protectionism, the government has failed consistently.

DFAIT officials before a committee admitted that the government had failed to take pre-emptive action against buy American, even though President Obama has been stating made in America for months.

The WTO found United States country of origin labelling is a trade violation and yet the government makes excuses.

When will the Minister of International Trade realize that United States protectionism is something he must defend against, not make excuses for.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was actually the Liberal Party that slept through 13 long years on the trade file.

It was the WTO that recently pointed out that Canada's considerably expanded free trade agreement agenda marks a departure with its past practice. What practice are we referring to? It is the practice of the previous Liberal government.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government falls short every time it is faced with American protectionism. When the United States announced its Buy American initiative in 2009, it took the Conservatives seven months to react. According to the WTO, country-of-origin labelling violates trade laws. Nevertheless, the government continues to insist that the United States is negotiating in good faith.

When will the Conservatives realize that they have to fight American protectionism, not excuse it?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have stated time and again that trade is critical to Canada's long-term prosperity. We have been working very hard to impress upon our American neighbours that protectionism hurts not only Canadians, but it hurts Americans. It takes away jobs and it takes away the robustness of global trade.

We will continue to stand up for hard-working Canadians and businesses. Why will the Liberal Party not do so?

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*[Translation]***RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government's research and development policy is pathetic, and a recent report has confirmed that. Canada ranks last among industrialized countries in terms of direct funding for research. It ranks second-last in terms of patent development and second-last in terms of the number of PhD graduates. What a failure.

Will this government review its research and development policies to create the jobs that our economy and Canadian families so desperately need?

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of that question. In fact, no government in the history of our country has put so much investment into science and technology. In fact, the brain drain that we knew about years and years ago under the Liberals has been reversed under this government.

We now have more fellowships, more internships, more Canada excellence research chairs and more Canada research chairs. We have funding for buildings and equipment.

That is under this Prime Minister, and that is a fantastic record.

●(1455)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would be great if it were true but it simply is not.

On this side of the House, we believe in innovation, but let us see the record on the other side. We see that direct public investment in R & D is in last place in the industrialized world. Patent development is second to last. PhD graduates are second to last. That is the record of the government. It is clear that the government does not have a plan.

When will the government stop endangering our economy and start investing in research and development to create jobs here in Canada for Canadian families.

Oral Questions

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, productivity and innovation have been declining for decades, which is exactly why the Prime Minister came forward with the science and tech strategy in 2007. Under that strategy, we have invested historic amounts of funding for our universities and incentives for our businesses.

It is true that businesses are not doing enough, which is exactly why, if the member were paying attention, we launched a panel review into the R and D sectors and our platform of programs. That panel will report in a couple of weeks. The hon. member should stay tuned.

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POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics passed an important motion to investigate the questionable influence of big unions on the NDP.

Last week, it was revealed that the NDP received at least \$85,000 from big labour unions for their convention even though such donations were banned in 2005.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister please update the House on Elections Canada law and what we are doing to ensure Canadians know about the big union donations that are subsidizing the NDP?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this type of behaviour on behalf of the NDP is entirely unacceptable. The Elections Canada Act clearly indicates that corporate and union donations are not allowed. Political parties are required to raise money through donations from ordinary everyday Canadians. Elections Canada has been asked to investigate these sponsorships.

The NDP and its union friends do not need to wait for that. They can come clean with Canadians today. We do not need to go to the ethics committee. They could come clean and tell Canadians today but they are not doing it.

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GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in February, the Conservatives gave a \$75,000 accessibility grant to the Ontario Cornerstone Leadership Corporation, a front for the Ontario NDP, to install a wheelchair lift in its inaccessible party headquarters. The rules required that construction was to begin six months ago and be completed two months ago. It is obvious to anyone who walks up to the building that the project has not even started.

Where did the money go? If the money was improperly spent, will the government demand that the money be returned to the taxpayer?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government has done more for Canadians with disabilities than our Conservative government. Their

full participation in our economy and communities is vital to our country's success. Supporting Canadians of all abilities through the economic action plan helped create opportunities for people who otherwise would not have had them.

We are very proud of this program and, to date, we have supported over 600 worthy community-based projects across the country. Budget 2010 provided an additional \$45 million over the next three years and will expand this program for mid-sized projects. We are doing what we need to do for Canadians with disabilities.

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THE ECONOMY

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian university graduates are being shut out of the job market at an alarming rate. A whopping one in five grads wind up with jobs on the low end of the income scale. That is more than any other OECD country. Instead of helping strengthen our economy with their degrees and skills, they are being wasted.

When will the government stop the inaction and come forward with a real jobs plan with real opportunities for Canadian graduates?

• (1500)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to support jobs and growth. It is the second phase of the economic action plan. It includes the small business tax credit, which is very important, and I hope members opposite will choose to support that.

The NDP and the Liberals voted against \$1 billion in federal funding to the provinces and territories for infrastructure in 2011-12. The opposition also voted against the accelerated capital cost allowance, which would have continued over the past two years. I hope the voting behaviour will match the rhetoric.

* * *

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent statistics have shown us that the number of people smoking in this country is at historic lows. Our government takes the health and safety of Canadians seriously and we will continue our diligent work, not only to encourage more and more people to quit smoking but also to discourage young Canadians from starting this bad habit in the first place.

Today, the Minister of Health announced tough new warnings for tobacco products. Would the parliamentary secretary please provide the details of this announcement to the House?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brampton—Springdale for all his good work on the health committee.

Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to continue efforts aimed at keeping our citizens healthy. Today we announced new warnings for tobacco products. The 16 new warnings cover 75% of the front and back of cigarette and little cigar packages, with eight health information messages and four toxic emission statements on the sides of the packages.

Our government wants to sensitize Canadians to the health challenges posed by tobacco products and we will continue to act in order to protect Canadians' health and keep our children safe.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Asia-Pacific gateway should be about more than the Conservative strategy of just shipping our raw materials overseas.

Last week, the president of the Asia Pacific Foundation advised the government that to be successful in expanding our trade, Canada needed to invest in human capacity building. This means investing in better language education, better training in cross-cultural communication and more support for international business education.

Why are the Conservatives just shipping away Canadian raw materials and jobs instead of making the smart investments in Canadians that will build a foundation for expanding our trade with the region?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Asia-Pacific gateway is critical to Canada's long-term economic prosperity. As the demand for Canadian exports to the Asia-Pacific markets continue to grow so do the opportunities for Canadian workers and companies. We are well-positioned to take advantage of the Asia-Pacific markets so we can create economic growth, more jobs and financial security for all Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

On top of recent cuts at Environment Canada, we are aware now that the whole glaciology group at Natural Resources Canada is being disbanded and dismantled. Eighty thousand years worth of climate record in the ice cores may disappear from Canadian possession.

I would like to ask the minister if he would please reconsider and ensure that this essential science is protected and that Canada continues its world record-breaking work in this key and core area of science?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is misinformed. There will be no destruction of the ice cores. In fact, having provided the useful

Points of Order

scientific input at NRCan, they will be transferred to universities where the research can continue.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Dustin Duncan, Minister of the Environment for Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

OFFICIAL REPORT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The other day in the House of Commons I raised a question and stated, "In Alberta, Jonathan Denis, the housing minister, now says that Alberta will pick up the slack where the federal government has failed".

I wish to correct the record. I read the story in a media release and I verified it. He did not actually say that he would "pick up the slack". He did say, "It didn't sit well with me that someone who's put their life on the line for our country was homeless", noting no one should be homeless, but this particular case hit him hard. Further on in the media release he stated that he wanted to assist those homeless veterans.

Even though I personally believe that issues involving veterans are federal issues, I am proud to say that the Alberta government and other governments are doing something to help these veterans.

I did quote Mr. Denis incorrectly and I wish to apologize to him and correct the record.

• (1505)

The Speaker: The House appreciates that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the course of question period today, you made a point of saying that someone could not do indirectly what he or she is not allowed to do directly.

In that context, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would take the time to have a look at Standing Order 31 in the name of the member for Vancouver South, which must have been approved by her whip, which must have been approved by the leadership of her caucus and which was a direct personal attack on the member for Scarborough—Agincourt and seemed to have gone unobserved by those who were listening to it.

I wonder if you would have a look at the record, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I will examine the transcript and get back to the House if necessary.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: I will go back to the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert, who has six minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my previous comments, I was talking about Bill C-10 and specifically the portion affecting the amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

On the old Bill C-4 from the last Parliament, the justice committee heard concerns from many of the provincial attorneys general concerning the issue of pretrial detention. I would remind the House that the primary concern of provinces with the approach of Bill C-4 was that pretrial detention would not be available to a youth charged with an offence that was not “a serious offence”.

The provisions in the current Bill C-10 address this concern. Under the proposed amendments, pretrial detention of a youth charged with a non-serious offence is possible if the youth has a history that indicates a pattern of either outstanding charges or findings of guilt and if the court finds that detention is necessary for the protection and safety of the public.

This change would allow for detention of so-called out-of-control youth who would pose a danger to society even if that youth were not presently before the court on a serious offence charge.

Moreover, the test for pretrial detention will be self-contained in the Youth Criminal Justice Act, without requiring reference to the Criminal Code provisions as is currently the case.

The second modification to the former Bill C-4 deals with the availability of the deferred custody and supervision order, which is a Youth Criminal Justice Act sentencing option that allows a young person who would otherwise be sentenced to custody to serve his or her sentence in the community under conditions. If those conditions are violated, the young person can be sent to custody.

Under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, this order is not available as a sentencing option if the young person has been found guilty of a serious violent offence, currently defined in the act as an offence in the commission of which a young person causes or attempts to cause serious bodily harm.

The new narrower definition of a “serious violent offence” proposed in Bill C-4 would have expanded the scope of offences for which deferred custody and supervision orders would be available.

However, the provisions in the current bill include the new definition of “serious violent offence” and would also include a change to the amendments proposed in the former Bill C-4 in order to retain the current law on eligibility for these orders, meaning that a

deferred custody and supervision order will not be available if the youth is found guilty of an offence involving either serious bodily harm or an attempt to cause serious bodily harm. I think members could agree with me that these modifications are an improvement over the former Bill C-4.

The third modification since Bill C-4 concerns the adult sentencing provisions in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The amendments to the former Bill C-4 and contained in this new bill would require a prosecutor to consider seeking an adult sentence for young offenders 14 and older who committed serious violent offences. Prosecutors would also have to inform the court if they decided not to apply for an adult sentence for individual 14 or older who were convicted of a serious violent offence. When the Crown would apply for an adult sentence, the onus would have been on the Crown to convince the judge that an adult sentence was justified.

In part these amendments respond to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in the case of *R. v. D.B.* that certain provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act violated section 7 of the charter. These presumptive offence provisions placed an onus on a young person found guilty of certain serious violent offences to justify receiving a youth rather than an adult sentence and to justify the continued protection of their privacy.

The proposed amendments remove the presumptive offence provisions from the Youth Criminal Justice Act as well as other inoperative provisions to clarify the test for the imposition of an adult sentence and ensure that the onus is on the Crown to satisfy the court as to the appropriateness of an adult sentence.

In the former Bill C-4 the proposed test for an adult sentence would have required that a judge be satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that an adult sentence was necessary. When we were consulting, a number of the provinces expressed the view that “beyond a reasonable doubt” was too high a standard to meet, was not required by the current case law and would make it significantly more difficult to obtain adult sentences in appropriate circumstances.

The current proposals remove reference to the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard that had been in the former Bill C-4, thus leaving it up to the courts to determine the appropriate standard of proof, as is the case under the current law.

• (1510)

I think all members of the House will agree that the amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act included in Bill C-10 are the result of the widespread consultations and respond to the concerns of Canadians. Our government listened to our provincial and territorial counterparts, to provincial attorneys general, Canadians and victims and have made the necessary changes to this part of Bill C-10.

I think all members can agree that the changes I have described and outlined for the House are reasonable and responsive. I encourage all hon. members to support all parts of Bill C-10.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental elements of this omnibus bill obviously deals with the issue of mandatory minimums as a deterrent. Would my hon. colleague justify how this is to be a deterrent when it comes to mandatory minimums?

We have examples where in certain jurisdictions around North America the death penalty exists, yet their capital offence rates are much higher than jurisdictions that do not have the death penalty in place. When we see situations like that, we have to wonder whether mandatory minimums do serve as that deterrent? Perhaps my colleague can convince me that this is the case.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been listening to my speech, he would have known that I was talking specifically about changing amendments and provisions to the Youth Criminal Justice Act not to the minimum mandatory sentence provisions, which I suspect he might be referring to those who traffic in cannabis and other controlled substances.

However, notwithstanding the lack of relevance of the question toward my speech, I will attempt to answer it. Certainly, there are no provisions anywhere in Bill C-10 dealing with death sentences, nor ought there to be in my view.

Minimum mandatory sentences in appropriate circumstances do deter crime for one very simple proposition that appears to be lost on most members of the opposition, and that is an individual when incarcerated cannot commit further crimes.

• (1515)

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has introduced the safe streets and communities act as if the very title alone validates the legislation. It is presented to us as it is called *res ipsa loquitur*. The very title speaks for itself. If there is any doubt, the government repeats the mantra, as it is done over and over today, that it has “a mandate” for enacting the safe streets and communities act.

Every government not only has a mandate but an obligation to protect its citizens. As a government, we too spoke of safe streets and safe communities in our speech from the throne. Five years ago, in debate in this very House, I spoke as follows:

Safe streets and safe communities are the shared aspiration of all Canadians and the common objective of all parliamentarians and parties. No political party can claim that it alone speaks or cares for the safety of all Canadians or that it alone is legislating for that purpose.

The question then becomes this. What are the means that are chosen to bring about what we have defined as a shared objective of all governments and all parties, namely safe streets and safe

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communities? For example, we cannot enact unconstitutional legislation and say “These measures are necessary to protect safe streets and safe communities”. Nor can we justify bad policy through the repetition of the mantra about a mandate. Legislation has to be examined on the merits.

Accordingly this omnibus legislation, taken as a whole, because there are certain bills within that I would support if the good and the bad were not bundled together, reminds me of Gresham's law, that the bad drives out the good. This type of omnibus legislation will result in more crime and less justice at exorbitant and still undisclosed costs.

I will summarize some of the principal defects of the legislation.

First, even before this legislation was tabled, and this appears to be overlooked by the government sometimes, there was a serious problem of prison overcrowding, with some provinces already reporting 200% capacity. We know overcrowding leads to more crime within prisons and more crime outside prisons. The U.S. supreme court has found that overcrowding of 137% can even constitute cruel and unusual punishment. This legislation will only exacerbate the problem in Canada, both as a matter of policy and arguably even as a matter of the constitution.

[Translation]

Second, we need to talk about cost. Not only do we not know how much all these measures will cost, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that just one part of this bill will cost \$5 billion. Canadians and Parliament have the right to all of the figures.

Third, we need to consult the provinces and territories, which will be assuming these costs, to the detriment of services, and ensure that the focus is also on crime prevention and not just on crime and punishment.

[English]

Fourth, bundling nine major pieces of legislation in one omnibus bill would not allow for sufficient and differentiated parliamentary discussion and debate let alone oversight of the legislation. This is a constitutional responsibility of parliamentarians particularly with the spending this bill has though the costs remain undisclosed. In effect, it would serve to undermine the parliamentary process.

If we ask the Canadian people if they are in favour of protecting victims and of safe streets, of course the answer will be yes. The question is how to achieve that. This bill would not achieve that. Rather, it would make things worse.

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Fifth, the omnibus bill is about principles and priorities. At its core it is about values. If we spend billions of dollars on building unnecessary prisons while crime is receding and putting more people in prison for longer periods of time, that money cannot be used to invest in: a social justice agenda, child care, health care, crime prevention, seniors or social housing. At the end of the day, we would probably have more crime and less justice as a result of this bill.

The evidence demonstrates that the use of mandatory minimum sentences such as would be expanded by this legislation would not deter crime and would have a differential discriminatory impact on vulnerable groups. I particularly highlight the differential and discriminatory impact it would have on aboriginal people, where 34% of all women inmates are aboriginal, and unduly circumscribes judicial and prosecutorial discretion.

As has been mentioned in this debate, even U.S. conservatives now regard it as a failed policy that has caused the prison population to skyrocket while creating expensive megajails that have effectively become factories of crime.

Finally, the manner in which debate is being limited is an abuse of the parliamentary process if not an abuse of the democratic process. In effect, we are being asked to inhibit discussion with our constituents and almost silence or shut them out of the debate. This prejudices members of Parliament from all parties.

The Minister of Justice said that this bill and the bills contained within it were before us in the previous Parliament. There are many current members of the House who were not members of the House in previous Parliaments. Why should they not have a right to discuss this legislation? Why should we not solicit their input? Why should they not be able to consult their constituents? In effect, that is an abuse of the democratic and parliamentary processes and prejudices the very objective this legislation seeks.

I would call upon the government to rethink and revisit its approach with respect to procedure, principle and policy. This sets a disturbing precedent regarding parliamentary procedure as well as a disturbing principle regarding a matter wherein it seeks to enact criminal justice policy.

• (1520)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I strongly disagree with the member for Mount Royal's substantive critique of the bill before the House. In my question I would ask him to address his complaints with respect to process.

I would emphasize that not only were the bills collectively given dozens of hours of debate in the previous Parliament, they were a central element in the electoral platform of the Conservative Party, which committed to passing these bills within 100 days of the resumption of a new Parliament.

For him to characterize the government maintaining its democratic commitment and executing its democratic mandate as somehow undemocratic denudes the term "democracy" of any meaning.

He said that all members should have an opportunity to debate. Of course we will have a debate. We will continue to have a debate on

these matters. Every party and many dozens of members have spoken to the bill.

Let us be clear. The opposition will do everything it can to prevent the bill from passing. It is not interested in debate. It is interested in using dilatory tactics to prevent the adoption of the legislation, which is a core part of the government's democratic mandate.

He said that this is without precedent. I was in the opposition when his party invoked a time limit on debate dozens of times, so I think he is being a bit—

The Speaker: Order. I will stop the member there to allow the member for Mount Royal a chance to respond.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, the architects of prorogation do not have any lessons to give us about the protection of parliamentary procedure and protection of parliamentary debate.

The notion as the minister has put it that these bills were all public through their introduction in the previous Parliament is no less problematic than it is demagoguery. Not all of these bills made it through full deliberation and debate in the House let alone in clause-by-clause consideration in committee.

More important, there are new MPs on his side of the House as well as on this side of the House who deserve to have the right to participate in a debate on these bills, which they will not have a chance to do, to discuss it with their constituents and not have the mantra thrown at them: we have a mandate.

We all have a mandate for safe streets and safe communities. The question is how to achieve that mandate. It will not be achieved through this procedure.

• (1525)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech the hon. member said that there are parts of the omnibus bill that the opposition agrees with. Would he tell us what the government could do with this omnibus bill if it were really interested in the security of victims and helping victims, if it were really interested in enforcing the laws of this country?

What could the government do to help speed up this omnibus bill?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, one of the first things it could do is to unbundle this legislation and allow for a differentiated consideration of each bill on its merit.

For example, let us take the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and related amendments to the State Immunity Act, former Bill S-7. I myself introduced a private member's bill on this issue. I support this legislation in principle, though it could be refined by way of amendment with respect to the issues in my private member's bill. This will not even get to the floor for discussion and debate.

At the end of the day, we will have a bill that provides civil remedies for victims of terror. I support that and many members in the House would support that. However, it would not be as good or as effective a bill as it could be without a differentiated study of it.

Similarly, with respect to the Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act, we could discuss and even approve that kind of bill in a very short period of time.

I can go through all of this legislation. However, in a word I am saying "unbundle" the bill. Allow every piece of legislation to be considered on its merits. Some bills can be fast-tracked because we will find consensus in the House with respect to the principles and the policies of the bills. Others will be properly amended and improved for the sake of the public and criminal justice, generally speaking.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with much interest to the hon. members' contributions on Bill C-10. I am grateful to have the opportunity to join the debate.

As members know, in the spring of this year our government made a commitment that should Canadians give us their trust and return us to office we would swiftly reintroduce our legislation to make our families, streets and communities safer.

This bill includes a broad range of measures. It includes measures that crack down on drug dealers who target our children. It also includes measures to ensure that those convicted of a sexual offence against children will never be eligible to have their record suspended. It includes measures to get tough on violent young offenders. As well, it includes measures to increase offender accountability and provide stronger justice for victims.

There are several portfolios under which this legislation, the Safe Streets and Communities Act, falls. In addition to justice and public safety there is legislation in the bill that is part of strengthening Canada's immigration system. It is to those proposed changes that I would like to speak today.

Canada's immigration system is an important part of our identity, economy and society. I see these impacts every day in my great riding of Don Valley West. For those people who are applying to enter our country, Canada represents hope, safety and a new beginning. Unfortunately, some arrive here only to have their hopes and dreams shattered. For example, some temporary foreign workers are more vulnerable than others. We cannot turn our backs on them. That is why the Safe Streets and Communities Act includes measures that would prevent the trafficking, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable immigrants.

According to the provisions of Bill C-10, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism would have the authority to provide immigration officers with instructions for refusing a work permit. Instructions would be based on clear public policy considerations and would be supported by evidence that shows the risk of humiliating or degrading treatment. The instructions would not target specific work permit applicants directly. Rather they would apply to applicants of a particular occupation or a group of applicants who could be identified as vulnerable to abuse or exploitation.

The instructions would describe situations that could represent risks to an applicant and would set out the risk factors for officers to consider. They would also help define who would be considered vulnerable depending on the situation or context. For example, an individual applying to come to Canada as an exotic dancer might be

refused a work permit because he or she may be vulnerable to abuse. However, the same individual might be granted a work permit if he or she applied to come to Canada to work in another occupation or a different situation that did not pose the same risk.

It is also important to note that this legislation only creates the legal authority to issue instructions. It does not establish any actual instructions. We anticipate that input from all members of the House will be forthcoming as these ministerial instructions are drafted. Their input is certainly welcome.

Without these amendments, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has no discretionary authority to deny a work permit to someone who meets all the requirements to enter Canada even if immigration officers believe there is a strong possibility of exploitation or abuse. The amendments we propose also include strong measures to ensure that the government is accountable for its use of the new authority. There will be accountability. Each time the minister issues instructions under the authority they must be published in the *Canada Gazette*. In addition, they must be published in Citizenship and Immigration Canada's annual report to Parliament.

Assessments by immigration officers would be made on a case-by-case basis and would take into account the public policy considerations set out in the ministerial instructions.

• (1530)

As I have already stated, these would need to be supported by evidence showing the risk of humiliating or degrading treatment. Furthermore, any decision by an immigration officer to refuse a work permit would need to be reviewed by a second immigration officer.

Canadians do not want an immigration system that can be used to victimize or exploit people. With this authority we can help protect vulnerable people from being brought into our country to face abuse and exploitation. Bill C-10 will protect the vulnerable from abuse.

Again, this action that would prevent the exploitation of vulnerable foreign workers is only one part of our comprehensive crime legislation that makes up the safe streets and communities act.

To recap, the legislation before the House would better protect children and youth from sexual predators; increase penalties for organized drug crime; end house arrest for serious crime, and thus prevent serious criminals from serving out their sentences from the comfort of their living rooms; protect the public from violent young offenders; eliminate pardons for serious crimes, such as sexual abuse against children; enshrine in law a number of additional key factors in deciding whether an offender would be granted a transfer back to Canada; support victims of terrorism; increase offender accountability and support victims of crime; and, as I have discussed here today, protect vulnerable foreign nationals against abuse and exploitation.

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Parliament has already seen and debated a great deal of this legislation. None of it is a surprise. All of it is part of our important action to make Canada's streets and communities safer for law-abiding Canadians and their families.

We made a commitment to Canadians. Canadians gave us a strong mandate to follow through on that commitment, and that is what the safe streets and communities act is about.

I close by asking that the hon. members across the floor join our government as we work to keep Canadians safe by helping us to pass this important legislation.

● (1535)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are two aspects of the crime bill that the hon. member did not appear to address in speaking about the bill.

One is that in the last Parliament, public prosecutors came to testify on the previous proposed provisions for mandatory minimum sentences for juvenile offenders. They testified that only 5% of all youth offenders are actually involved in violent crime and that it did not make sense to have a blanket approach to all youth offenders.

Second, there was a very sad incident in my riding this past summer. The alleged actions of someone who was mentally suffering caused the death of an elderly woman.

I would ask the member for his comments on the apparent rise in numbers of people with mental problems who are being sentenced for crimes instead of being re-routed before the crimes are committed, thus preventing the crimes. What is the response to that? Should we not be taking action to prevent people with mental problems from committing serious crimes, rather than jailing them?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, clearly these issues go hand in hand. Our mandate is to make our streets and communities safer for our families. As the member experienced, in my riding we had three serious shooting events that clearly described the severity of gang violence and drug violence in communities today.

I understand her question on the mental health issue clearly. We have a responsibility to ensure that those questions are addressed as well, but our mandate is to deliver this bill. I would ask her to get on board with us and vote in favour of this bill so that we could take it to committee and deal with these issues directly.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member across the way for eloquently stating his ground. However, there was a point that I missed, and I would ask for clarification.

My colleague stated that the bill would help temporary foreign workers in Canada. He said that it would give the minister the right to extend their work permits. Then he went on to say that if there is an exotic dancer who applies and does not qualify, then that person could apply for something else.

I wonder if the member is recommending to the people who want to come to Canada that they can shop around in how they could apply to come to Canada. That is what I understood from his wording. I am sure that if he looked through his speech, I think he might find that he made a mistake and might want to rephrase what he said.

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I will review my speech in due course, but clearly we want to protect the victims of abuse and take steps to ensure that newcomers to this country are not exploited or taken advantage of.

In the case of that one example, we know that those who come here are in a vulnerable state and could be placed in a position of untenable stress.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is outranked among western democracies only by the United States in terms of its high incarceration rate. Barring interventions, prison populations are expected to grow in the next decade by over 50%. I wonder if the member—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

We will get back to the member for Davenport. I am sure that members, and certainly the member for Don Valley West, will need to hear the question and comment.

The hon. member for Davenport.

● (1540)

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Criminal Justice Association has a long list of reasons describing why overcrowding is detrimental to the rates of prisoners being able to be reintegrated into Canadian society. Overcrowding impairs reintegration efforts of offenders and contributes to rates of recidivism. It spends vast quantities of resources to warehouse inmates, with negative rather than positive impacts, diverts resources from treatment and cripples the ability of the system to deliver programs and treatments in a timely and appropriate manner.

What we are going to have is more overcrowding. What is there in the bill that solves these problems? Could the member answer that question?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. member's question is outside the area I was speaking to today, but if we are going to provide safer streets and create crime bills that create deterrence, yes, there is going to be additional demand on our system. We are going to have to find resolution to living with that.

However, the mandate we have been given by the people of Canada is to provide safer streets for our communities and our families.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous respect for the member for Mount Royal, but he spent his entire opportunity to speak to the bill, which he said he did not have enough time to speak to, in explaining why he needed more time to speak to the bill. I am looking forward to having my opportunity to speak to Bill C-10, which I think does much for the people across this country.

Canada is a land of opportunity and freedoms, and we should not practise anything different. Many come to Canada to seek a better life but instead find themselves vulnerable to exploitation by employers. Found in vulnerable situations, they have no one to turn to. We should not let the vulnerable be exploited. We need to stand up for those who are being exploited by others.

I am speaking about one part of Bill C-10, which deals with preventing the trafficking, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable immigrants. It is former Bill C-56. Our government is making good on the commitment we made to Canadians. It is our duty to hold criminals accountable for their actions and to do everything we can to make our communities safe for law-abiding citizens who work hard and play by the rules. It is our duty not to let people take advantage of our generous immigration system.

People in St. Catharines have said that cracking down on criminals and making their community safer is one of their top priorities. People in Niagara and across the country want and deserve to be able to feel safe in their homes and communities, and that means criminals need to be kept off the street. I have heard my constituents loud and clear, and I will stand up and support the bill because they have asked me to do so.

The bill will not only keep our communities safe but will also ensure that vulnerable foreign workers who contribute to many of our communities are not exploited. As my hon. colleagues know, some temporary foreign workers may have weak language skills and very little money. They may have no family or friends in Canada and they may also fear the police and any level of government. This often puts them in a vulnerable position. With no one to turn to, their situation can place them at the mercy of those who wish to abuse them or exploit them.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I have conducted consultations with employers who rely on the temporary foreign worker program. Almost all of them treat their employees with the respect and dignity they deserve, but some of them do not. When we talk to employers who use the temporary foreign worker program and entreat individuals to come from another country to work in this country to help provide for their families back home and earn a living, it is clear that there are those in this country who do take advantage of temporary foreign workers who come to Canada.

Whether it is New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario or Quebec, employers who love and use and understand this program have developed it into something that is respected around the world. In my view and in many employers' views, the program is actually the best foreign support program we could offer workers because of what it allows them to do in terms of bringing home the revenue they are able to make here. It helps their families, it helps their children go to school, it improves their lives with respect to their homes, and it ensures that their children get a college or university education.

It is the same employers who support this program who want us to crack down on the employers who take advantage of those individuals.

That is exactly what the bill would do. It is what this portion of the bill would allow us to move forward on. The bill would help us protect vulnerable foreign workers by giving immigration officers the authority to deny work permits to those who are at risk of humiliating and degrading treatment, including sexual exploitation. The ability to deny work permits to vulnerable workers would enable the government to protect applicants by keeping them out of these types of situations.

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Bill C-10 would actually alter the current objective in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, section 3. Instead of referring to protecting "the health and safety of Canadians", it would refer to protecting "public health and safety".

• (1545)

We are not just defining the bill anymore to Canadians. We are extending that obligation of employers and of our government to those who are here on a temporary basis to seek and find employment and work here on behalf of their families at home. We are doing this because the government believes that it is our responsibility to protect the health and safety of individuals who not only apply for Canadian citizenship and permanent residence, but apply to work here in our country legally.

We are committed to ensuring that Canada's immigration system continues to have a positive impact on our economy in society and that everyone who enters Canada has a fair chance to find what they are looking for, which is hope, safety and a new start. It does not make sense for the government to knowingly authorize vulnerable foreign nationals to enter into a potentially abusive situation. As the government, we will work to ensure that people who come to Canada can pursue their new lives without fear for their own safety.

Bill C-10 is an important step forward to that goal. If members share this goal, I ask them to support this legislation.

Preventing the trafficking, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable immigrants act would authorize immigration officers to refuse work permits to vulnerable foreign nationals when it is determined that they are at risk of humiliating or degrading treatment, including sexual exploitation or human trafficking. This is but one of ten, but a step in the right direction to accomplishing that.

I would also submit that we have seen the success of the program. Many employers across the country call this the best foreign aid program this country has to offer. We have temporary foreign workers who come here and are able to fulfill an obligation that they have to themselves and to their family to provide for a stronger future for their families in the countries they come from. Many of those temporary foreign workers who come here have told me about how successful this program has been and what it means to them. All of them feel that their employers treat them in a way that makes them feel they are part of the organization, part of the company, part of the extended family.

By putting this bill forward, we are not only suggesting to Canadians and to employers across this country that fair, humane and equal treatment is an obligation that we have, both under our Constitution and obviously under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but it is an obligation that we are now extending not just to Canadian citizens, not just to permanent residents, but to those who come here to work under the conditions of a permit that they have met the obligations of, and have a chance to work for their families and for themselves, to put their children through school and to build a better life.

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With this bill, we would be putting in place a system that would actually improve a program upon which, since the 1960s, we have built on in this country, that has been successful and that has proven to be successful. In fact, with the enhancements in a small part of this bill, we would be preparing and providing for them in a much stronger and better way than we already are.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for elaborating on one part of the bill that is before us.

I would like to ask two questions pertaining to two parts of the bill. First, what concrete measures will ensure that temporary foreign workers will not be exploited? And how will the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration verify the working conditions of foreign workers to ensure that they are not being exploited?

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the second part of the question first.

Basically, our department, along with Human Resources and Development Canada, spends a great deal of time ensuring that those employers who seek to have temporary foreign workers assist them in their companies have it done in a manner that is clear and effective. Every employer must meet specific standards with respect to this issue. The department and the government, along with our provincial counterparts, ensure that is put into place.

In terms of the first part of the member's question, very specifically, Bill C-10 would alter the current objective within the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Section 3(1)(h) would be changed from protecting the health and safety of Canadians to protecting public health and safety. This extends, specifically, the right to fair treatment and the right to the type of protection to which I spoke, not just to Canadians and permanent resident but to temporary foreign workers as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem with this particular bill is that the government has made a decision in its wisdom to say that it wants this, this and this. Those are all pieces that should have been separate pieces of legislation so that when the government brings forward individual pieces of legislation there is more legitimacy to the debate on the issue and the law that it is attempting to change.

There are many things that we could be doing in terms of amendments to the refugee and immigration laws.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration recognize that there is so much more that could have been done had this been a stand-alone bill, which would have enabled all members to have a better engagement on what is a critically important issue across this country? In fact, there needs to be dialogue with provinces? Some provinces have actually made significant advancements on protecting the workers. Would the hon. member not agree with that?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I understand the point the member is making. I compliment him on his appointment as critic

for the third party at our citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism committee. I look forward to working with him on that committee.

The member understands. He was here for part of the 40th Parliament when we introduced and passed Bill C-11, Balanced Refugee Reform Act and Bill C-35, the crooked consultants act, two pieces of significant legislation. In fact, I would argue that, aside from our budget, Bill C-11 was the most significant piece of legislation that this Parliament passed in the 40th Parliament. That legislation arrived in this House after second reading, went to committee, came back for third reading and was passed unanimously by the House.

I can let the member know that we have lots in this bill that we want to pass. We have passed quite a bit with respect to citizenship and immigration. There is a lot more to come.

• (1555)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is very much a rural riding. In that riding, from one end to the other, we have the great use of the temporary foreign workers programs. It is so significant and so important to our farming community, whether it is apple orchards or greenhouses. I have been to a number of those farm operations. The care that these operations provide for their temporary workers is just immeasurable, quite honestly, and they are the ones I want to compliment.

However, these operators are also concerned about those who do not have protection. They want to ensure that, when a bill goes through, it will actually offer protection so that no foreign worker is being exploited. Would this bill fulfill that need?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this issue, time and again the member has come to speak to me about the good work that the employers in his riding are doing and about the importance the put on the treatment of foreign workers in his community.

I want to assure the member that from a department perspective we will continue to work at that. As a government, we show support to those employers who want to follow the rules and ensure that this program works but for those who do not they will pay substantially for it.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to participate in the debate on Bill C-10, the Conservative government's omnibus crime bill. Sadly, I only have 10 minutes to make my remarks, which is wholly inadequate for offering an in-depth analysis of each section of the 110 page bill.

However, since this is second reading, the stage in a bill's passage during which all members are charged with providing feedback to the government on the principles of the legislation before us, I am confident that I can at least do that within the allotted timeframe.

I will begin by stating what ought to be obvious. All members in the House, regardless of political party, agree that serious crime requires a serious response. There is absolutely no debate here. However, we also need to remember that the iconic statue of justice holds a scale in her hand for a reason: justice requires balance. It is that balance that is lost in the bill that is before us today.

My NDP colleagues from Windsor—Tecumseh and Vancouver Kingsway have already articulated the fact that the bill puts wedge politics and ideology ahead of facts and evidence. It is a point that bears repeating.

It is absolutely true that we have three years of evidence now to prove that the violent crime rate in Canada is falling dramatically. We also know that there is not a single empirical study in Canada, or any other democracy for that matter, which proves that incarceration is an effective deterrent.

On the contrary, by imposing mandatory minimums on young offenders and therefore sending them to jail for longer periods of time, we will be creating more recidivists, not less. A government policy that turns young offenders into hardened criminals surely must be seen as completely undermining the goals of any criminal justice reform.

Equally absurd is the part of the bill that mandates less jail time for a child rapist than someone being charged with growing pot. The omnibus legislation would impose a one year mandatory minimum for sexually assaulting a child, luring a child via the Internet or involving a child in bestiality. All three of those offences carry lighter automatic sentences than those for people running medium sized grow-ops in rental property or on someone else's land. A pedophile who gets a child to watch pornography with him or someone who exposes himself to kids at a playground would receive a minimum 90 day sentence, half the term of a man convicted of growing six pot plants in his own home.

I do not think there is a single constituent in my riding of Hamilton Mountain who would agree with either that approach or that outcome. However, that is what we get when, instead of looking at the Criminal Code as a whole, exploring reforms systematically and ensuring that the same sentencing principles are applied in all sections of the code, we have a government that simply lumps a whole bunch of pre-election promises together in an act of political expediency. Ideologically, the government may want to be seen as being tough on crime but effective criminal law reform requires us to be smart on crime. Bill C-10 fails that test completely.

The Canadian Bar Association would concur with my assessment. The association made a specific comment on the minimum sentencing provisions of the bill by pointing out that they fail the mentally ill, aboriginal people, visible minorities and the poor. Mandatory minimum legislation will simply clog the courts and fill Canadian prisons with vulnerable segments of the population. As a result, the Bar Association is calling on the government to reverse course and to allow judges leeway in applying mandatory minimums so that they are not imposed when it would be cruel or inappropriate.

The CBA is spot on. It leads me to ask my Conservative colleagues why they are so intent on imposing a straitjacket on Canadian judges by so aggressively pursuing mandatory minimum sentencing. Justice requires the ability to differentiate between similar offences when they are committed under completely different circumstances. I am not saying that judges are perfect. They are human and might on occasion make mistakes. However, they enjoy the confidence of the vast majority of Canadians. They are highly educated and highly trained and, therefore, are much better equipped

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to determine appropriate sentences than any of us here in the House. I suggest that we allow them to do their jobs.

There is a particular irony in the timing of the proposals contained in the bill with respect to mandatory minimums. While I appreciate that their genesis lies in the tough on crime and drugs approach adopted decades ago by the United States, the Conservatives are choosing to emulate that agenda at precisely the time that it is being discredited south of the border, even by Republicans, as an exorbitantly expensive failure.

I will begin with the obvious. I want to reiterate the succinct statement made by my colleague the member for Kings—Hants:

If putting more people in prison for longer periods of time created safer communities, American cities would be the safest in the world, because nobody incarcerates more people than the Americans.

• (1600)

U.S. conservatives are now recognizing their folly. Even Newt Gingrich, the right-wing Republican former speaker, is on the record now acknowledging that longer prison terms have not been effective deterrents. In an editorial to *The Washington Post* he wrote:

Our prisons might be worth the current cost if the recidivism rate were not so high, but, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, half of the prisoners released this year are expected to be back in prison within three years. If our prison policies are failing half of the time, and we know that there are more humane, effective alternatives, it is time to fundamentally rethink how we treat and rehabilitate our prisoners.

He then went on to praise Texas as a state that has reduced its prison population while keeping the public safe. He wrote:

Several states have shown that it is possible to cut costs while keeping the public safe. Consider events in Texas, which is known to be tough on crime. Conservative Republicans joined with Democrats in adopting incentive-based funding to strengthen the state's probation system in 2005. Then in 2007, they decided against building more prisons and instead opted to enhance proven community corrections approaches such as drug courts. The reforms are forecast to save \$2 billion in prison costs over five years.

The Lone Star State has already redirected much of the money saved into community treatment for the mentally ill and low-level drug addicts. Not only have these reforms reduced Texas's prison population - helping to close the state budget gap - but for the first time there is no waiting list for drug treatment in the state. And crime has dropped 10 percent from 2004, the year before the reforms, through 2009, according to the latest figures available, reaching its lowest annual rate since 1973.

Canada should heed the experience south of the border and it should heed the advice of Gingrich, who himself entered into this debate primarily because of the exigencies of rising budget deficits.

Here in Canada, we appear to be on the brink of another recession and instead of investing in people and jobs, the Conservatives announced that they are seeking \$4 billion in annual savings. Clearly, the government is not seeing the forest for the trees.

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The Parliamentary Budget Officer is estimating that this new crime bill could double the annual prison costs from \$4.4 billion to \$9.5 billion in five years. That is an increase of \$5.1 billion, while they are looking for savings of \$4 billion in program costs elsewhere.

I would urge the government to put this question to Canadians: Do they support the doubling of prison costs at the cost of reduced benefits in other programs? Or would they rather see that money continue to be spent on health care, job creation, employment insurance, adequate pensions, and education for their kids?

I think the Prime Minister knows the answer and that is why he is not going to the Canadian people to offer them that choice. Instead, he is paying a private consultant \$90,000 a day to find savings in other programs just so he can pay for his ideological priority of building more jails. It is absolutely absurd.

Let me end where I started. I talked about the scales of justice and their symbolic call to all of us to strive for balance. I would therefore be remiss if I did not acknowledge that there are parts of this bill that I do support.

I do support the initiatives to protect children from exploitation including sexual assault. In fact, two of the new offences that this bill targets came from NDP private members' bills relating specifically to communicating for the purposes of luring a child. As I said before, we part ways when the government's solution focuses simplistically on creating additional mandatory minimums.

I also agree with putting victims rights into law. I would argue that this is long overdue.

I supported legislation in the last Parliament that blocked Karla Homolka from getting a pardon.

However, the additional changes proposed to the pardon system in this bill are neither rational nor evidence-based and they fail to put public safety first. That, to me, must be the basis for evaluating the entire omnibus bill. Failing that test, I cannot possibly vote in favour of the current bill.

• (1605)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague is aware of a recent article by Mr. Peter Blaikie who is one of the founding partners of the well-known Montreal law firm, Heenan Blaikie, and a former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. In an article on August 2 in *The Gazette* he stated:

A civilized, effective system of justice should have two overriding objectives: to protect society, perhaps forever, from the truly dangerous and, while punishing the others, using every possible effort to rehabilitate them, turning them into productive citizens. The government's approach, in effect and almost certainly in intention, reverses these objectives. It is all stick and no carrot. It even abandons the highly successful, self-sustaining, century-old program of prison farms, which taught generations of inmates critical life skills.

I would like her comments on this.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, when people actually start to look at the legislation, it is incredible how many are astounded at the lack of balance in the omnibus crime bill.

The member is absolutely right. It is always delicious in the House when a member quotes another Conservative and I appreciate him

doing that. It is perhaps one of the more fun moments that we get to enjoy in this place. However, it is an important piece of legislation and we should not make light of it.

The reality is that this bill does nothing for the victims of crime in terms of preventing crime from happening in the first place. If we are serious about wanting to help victims, we have to ensure they do not get victimized in the first place.

I would have liked to have seen provisions for expanded programs to deal with mental health issues, poverty, and all of the root causes of crime. Of course, none of that is in there. Instead, we are downloading prison costs to over-burdened provinces that cannot possibly deal with the additional demands that are made on their prison system.

As I said at the outset, there is absolutely no balance in the bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while I understand the political jousting that consists of vilifying the opposition by saying it plans to vote against certain parts of the bill, I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on this bill's general approach. It seems to pit victims and offenders against one another, as though each of these groups could not find within a bill any essential elements to improve safety.

I feel as though the government is creating a false sense of security with this bill. On the one hand, by imposing minimum sentences without coming up with any solutions to rehabilitate offenders, once those sentences are over, we will be no further ahead.

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right, there is nothing in the bill that talks about investments in rehabilitation.

As I said in my speech, all of us in this House, no matter which side of the floor we sit on, believe that serious crimes must be dealt with seriously. There is absolutely no disagreement. We all want our communities to be safe communities. However, let us look at the crime statistics. We know that crime has gone down over the last 20 years successively. That is true both for property crimes and for things like murder and assault.

The member is absolutely right to point out that what we need to do when we are dealing with the criminal justice system is to, first of all, deal with it holistically. We need to ensure that we deal with both the criminals and the victims in a way that is fair, that allows for rehabilitation in our prison system, and that we are not just adding cost without any benefit in creating a better justice system.

• (1610)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have enough time for one brief question and one brief response. The hon. member for Sudbury.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing we have been hearing over and over when it comes to everything else that the government talks about is cost. The Conservatives talk about it being costed in their election platform and costed here and there. However, there is absolutely nothing coming from the Conservatives that relates to the cost of the bill. Our justice critic has put the question to the minister and we did not get an answer. I would like to hear the member's comments.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Sudbury was here in the last Parliament when the Conservative government actually denied us access to the costing of its previous round of crime bills.

We know that prison costs are up 86% since the Conservatives took power. By 2013-14, the federal prison budget will almost double to over \$3 billion. This evidence exposes a real question of priorities. If the government is belt-tightening everywhere else, why is the opposite true here?

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act.

Hon. members will know that over five years ago our government made a promise to Canadians. We pledged to keep them safe and secure.

[Translation]

This bill builds on the work our government has already undertaken to more fully hold offenders to account for their actions and to stand up for victims.

[English]

Victims have always been central to our government's crime reduction agenda. With that in mind, I would like to devote my remarks today to discuss a very important component of Bill C-10 which deals with victims of terrorism.

[Translation]

The threat of terrorism is a reality for Canadians. It is not a distant concept or something that only happens in far corners of the globe.

[English]

The reality is that terrorism can happen. It has happened right here on our soil and Canadians can be, and are, also targeted by terrorist organizations when they are living, working, and travelling in other countries.

Since September 2001, 195 Canadians have fallen victim to terrorism. This year, on the tenth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, we remember the 24 Canadians killed that brutal morning.

In 2002, two Canadians were killed in the Bali bombings. Another individual killed by terrorists in Indonesia that day was my friend,

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Peter Record, a 32-year old British citizen. Peter was like any typical Canadian. He liked the outdoors, he enjoyed a pint of ale, but instead of hockey was a big rugby fan. Peter and I worked together in Hong Kong, and on that tragic day in 2002, he was vacationing in Bali when he was killed by a bomb. For me, this is a striking reminder that a terrorist attack is not something that only happens to the friends and families of others. Indeed, this is a global threat and Canada must do its part to protect its citizens.

In 2003, a year later, two Canadians were killed in the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. A Canadian diplomat was killed in Afghanistan in 2006 in an attack on a Canadian convey. Two years later, in 2008, four Canadians were killed and injured in the Bombay attacks, and another two Canadian aid workers were ambushed and killed by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

In 2009, an explosion in Kandahar City claimed the life of a Canadian journalist. More recently, in 2011, two Canadian citizens were killed in a café attack in Morocco. One hundred and fifty seven members of the Canadian Forces have been killed combatting terrorism while serving in the Afghanistan mission.

[English]

To this day, terrorism continues to threaten the lives of innocent citizens in Canada and around the world. A number of international and domestic extremist groups are present in Canada. Some engage in terrorist activities here or support terrorism beyond Canada's borders. Some have worked to manipulate or coerce members of Canadian society into advancing extremist causes hostile to our nation and our nation's values. Terrorism is a serious and persistent threat to the security of Canada and its citizens.

• (1615)

[Translation]

This government is committed to protecting Canada from terrorism and keeping its citizens safe in their communities. Ensuring the safety and security of all Canadians is a commitment our government takes seriously.

[English]

The bill before us today is another important initiative to strengthen our country's national security network.

Bill C-10 would complement our exiting counterterrorism measures by deterring terrorism, responding to the needs of victims of terrorism and demonstrating Canada's leadership in acting against the perpetrators and supporters of terrorism around the world. Indeed, Bill C-10 would constitute another important instrument in our efforts to deter this global threat.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide members with an overview of the provisions contained in Bill C-10, which pertain to victims of terrorism and explain how our government proposes to respond to their needs.

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To achieve these goals, Bill C-10 would allow victims of terrorism to sue, in a Canadian court, perpetrators of terrorist acts and their supporters, provided the victims could demonstrate a real and substantial connection between their actions in Canada.

Specifically, Bill C-10 would allow victims of terrorism to file a court case against perpetrators of terror, such terrorist entity listed under the Criminal Code, or other persons or organizations that carried out a terrorist attack. In addition, a legal case could be brought against individuals, entities or listed states which provide and support to a terrorist entity.

If the loss or damage occurs outside Canada, there must be a real and substantial connection to this country. This legislation would be retroactive to January 1, 1985, in order to allow victims of terrorism to seek redress for loss and damage that occurred as a result of a terrorist act committed anywhere in the world on or after that date. Allowing victims to terrorism to sue for past events would send a message to perpetrators and supporters of terror that Canada would hold them liable for their actions.

To allow for legal action against listed states, Bill C-10 would amend the State Immunity Act to lift the immunity of states that were supporters of terrorism. Lifting a state's immunity is a decision that cannot be taken lightly, as it may have significant impacts on Canada's international relations, interests and foreign policy.

This bill would create a robust mechanism for determining whether a foreign state should be listed as a supporter of terrorism. The Governor-in-Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, would be able to add a state to the list if there were reasonable grounds to believe that the state supported, or had supported, a terrorist entity listed under the Criminal Code.

Using the list of terrorist entities under the Criminal Code is an adequate criterion to justify the listing of a foreign state since the Criminal Code list is determined through a rigorous analytical process. There are currently 44 listed entities.

Let me assure members that the government will take all the appropriate precautions to minimize any potential negative impact on Canadian trade, or foreign relations or threats to Canadian personnel, interests and citizens abroad when listing and delisting states.

Bill C-10 would also establish a review mechanism to ensure the timely removal of states from the list if they were determined to no longer support terrorism. Here, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, would review the list every two years to determine whether a state should remain on the list and whether other countries should be added to the list.

Also, a listed state could apply to be removed by submitting a written application to this effect. Once this application was received, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Public Safety would decide whether there were reasonable grounds to recommend to the Governor-in-Council that the state no longer be listed.

Bill C-10 would do more than just create a cause of legal action for victims of terrorism. It would also allow plaintiffs who had received a judgment in their favour to request assistance from the

Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Public Safety in identifying and locating in Canada the property of a foreign state against which a judgment had been rendered. Such assistance would have to fall within the mandates of those ministers and would be provided to the extent reasonably practical, unless doing so would be detrimental to Canada's interests.

These provisions would strike a balance to allow the Government of Canada to help victims in real and tangible ways, while safeguarding Canada's standing in the international community.

Finally, Bill C-10 also calls for the recognition of foreign judgments by Canadian courts in favour of victims of terrorism.

Bill C-10 is yet another indication of our determination to give victims not only a voice, but legal means to seek justice against those who caused them harm. This is the latest tool in our growing arsenal to deal with the threats of the safety of Canadians both here at home and abroad.

I urge all hon. members to support Bill C-10 in order to provide justice for victims and punishment for terrorists perpetrators and supporters of terrorism.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech and ask him a question.

I am aware of the work that he did previously as the president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. One of my biggest concerns about Bill C-10 is the fact that we do not know how much it will cost the provinces. We do know that the bill will cost the federal and provincial governments a significant amount of money, particularly because of minimum sentences.

Can the hon. member give us an idea of how much will be covered by the provinces and how much will be covered by the federal government, and can he tell me what he thinks of a government that cannot give us an answer in this regard?

[English]

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, the member's question does not really address the issues I have raised today, but let me touch on it nonetheless. It is clear there is a cost to society when crime is allowed to happen and is not deterred. Our government is simply taking steps to reduce crime thereby saving society money.

I will touch on the comments by the Minister of Justice earlier today. It is ironic that the only time the official opposition seems to be concerned about spending initiatives is when it comes to the protection and safety of Canadians.

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Regarding this aspect of Bill C-10, this measure would give rights to the victims of terrorism to seek help or redress in the courts. This is not an area that will end up costing the Government of Canada huge sums of money. We are acting to facilitate victims of terrorism so they can seek justice in our courts for what happens here or around the world.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in a similar vein to the previous one. I know the member is an economist, but he also used to work for an organization that took every opportunity to be against higher government spending in favour of lower taxes.

Bill C-10 involves higher government spending, not the usual kind that is explicit and honestly stated, but hidden government spending. We have a situation where it may be \$3 billion, or \$10 billion or whatever numbers of billions of additional expenditures on prisons and the government refuses to give us any idea of what that additional cost is.

I have nothing against most of what the member said in terms of the ability of victims of terrorism to sue, that does not even cost much money, but the overall bill costs an unknown number of billions of dollars possibly ranging into tens of billions. Therefore, one might like something if it costs \$1 billion, but not like it if it costs \$12 billion.

How can the member possibly justify the government giving no information to Canadians on the cost of this legislation?

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, the group I used to work for, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, was primarily opposed to wasteful government spending, which is an altogether different thing than opposing all government spending.

On that note the member has a valid point. For example, the long gun registry sounded like a great idea when we were told it would cost \$2 million, but when the price tag hit \$2 billion, suddenly Canadians no longer agreed with it. The member is correct. Governments can waste money and often do.

Again, when it comes to the bill, documents were tabled that outlined some of the costs, but we also want to step back here. The Minister of Public Safety has pointed out in the media that his own department thought some of the provisions we enacted would increase the prison population to 16,000 when it had gone to 14,800. By getting tough on crime, it is the repeat offenders who are serving time in jail longer as opposed to us locking up more and more Canadians, which seems to be a concern of the opposition.

This is a reasonable bill, which addresses the concerns of Canadians. Yes, there is a cost to it, but there is a greater cost to society when government sits back and allows crime to happen without it being punished.

• (1625)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, The Environment; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Poverty.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the sweeping omnibus crime bill tabled by the government will have one clear result, and that is thousands more will be incarcerated, billions more will be spent on prisons and aboriginal Canadians will be most at risk.

This “jail everyone” policy shift contradicts testimony by experts and sound recommendations from countless national reviews on how to reduce the number of aboriginals committing crimes or who are the victims of crime.

While only 3% of Canadians are aboriginals, they constitute 22% of prison populations, nine times the national average.

I cannot even hear myself speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Edmonton—Strathcona has the floor. I am sure that members will be interested to hear. It is difficult to do that when there is so much noise in the chamber.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I do not appreciate the caustic comments coming back at my request for consideration.

This policy shift to jail everyone contradicts testimony by experts and the sound recommendations from countless national reviews on how to reduce the number of aboriginals committing crimes or who are the victims of crime. While only 3% of Canadians are aboriginal, they constitute 22% of the prison populations, nine times the national average. In 2008, one in four people identifying as aboriginal was in provincial or territorial sentence custody. In Nunavut, prisons are so crowded prisoners are sent away from the community to serve their sentences. They are dislocated from any community support. The long-standing housing shortage in Nunavut may soon be perversely solved through expanded jails.

Yet only 2% of the federal prison budget is spent on aboriginal programs. While the Canadian Human Rights Commission decries the government's failure to offer rehabilitation for aboriginal inmates, the government continues to cut effective programs, including prison farms and healing circles.

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National Chief Shawn Atleo has told us that aboriginal high school students are more likely to be incarcerated than to graduate. Aboriginal youth face a 14% unemployment rate. Aboriginal women suffer more than twice the rate of unemployment than non-aboriginal Canadians.

The Samson Cree first nation faces an unemployment rate of 53%, high levels of substance abuse, marked increase in gang activity, and among the highest rates of incarceration per population of any first nation in this country.

A task force of first nations, RCMP and government agencies examined the root causes and recommended a number of measures. At the top of the list was a youth centre to stream vulnerable youth away from the incubating of gangs, yet they were told the government does not fund recreation centres for aboriginals.

Aboriginal women make up a whopping one-third of women in custody. Federal correctional investigator Howard Sapers has reported systemic discrimination against aboriginal women prisoners. He has reported that they do not receive timely access to rehabilitation programs which hinders their community integration. Given the percentage of women imprisoned, that is likely having a significant impact on aboriginal communities.

Anyone who commits a crime must face justice, but is it not equally important to take action to prevent involvement in criminal activities?

As the majority of prisoners are released back into the community, and as the intended result of this legislation is to imprison more people, is it not important that greater attention be given to rehabilitation programming? Is that not important to reduce the risk of reoffending and thus reduce more victims of crime? Instead of building more jails, why not invest more in education and job creation for aboriginal Canadians?

Aboriginal people are also victims of crime and deserve informed, effective strategies to protect their communities and their streets.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2009, 37% of aboriginals age 15 or older in the provinces have suffered violent victimization compared to only 26% among non-aboriginals. Twelve per cent of aboriginal people have been victims of violent crime compared to 5% of other Canadians. In 2009, 67,000 or 13% of aboriginal women reported being a victim of one or more violent crimes. The number of aboriginal women reporting incidents of spousal violence was two times more than non-aboriginal women. The number of missing and murdered aboriginal women continues to rise.

In assuming the portfolio as aboriginal affairs and northern development critic for my party, I have taken the time to review reports by the Auditor General. Sixteen reports over two decades have raised significant issues regarding the federal response to rising aboriginal health, housing, education and employment disparities. Aboriginal affairs reports that aboriginal people are four times more likely to live in crowded dwellings and in poor conditions.

Sheila Fraser advised that she was profoundly disappointed to note that despite federal action in response to her recommendations, a disproportionate number of first nations people still lacked the most basic services that other Canadians take for granted. In her

words, "In a country as rich as Canada, this disparity is unacceptable". She called for action on structural impediments to services. Nowhere in her report does she call for the construction of yet more prisons to address this disparity.

• (1630)

The government has committed, under the Canada-First Nations Joint Action Plan, to address disparities in education, jobs and governance. It is unclear whether similar commitments will be extended to Inuit and Métis Canadians. The question to ask is, what new fiscal commitments are being made to deliver on these promises?

The government has yet to table in the House the projected costs of the prison expansions needed under Bill C-10. It has also not yet revealed if there will be cuts to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. In the last budget the government cut support for the healing centres. As many provinces are facing significant deficits, the downloading of prison expansion costs will have implications for their programs, such as for addictions and fetal alcohol syndrome.

Alberta already has faced public displeasure over the decision to cut its restorative justice program. Municipalities are begging for support for housing. Sadly, a good percentage of the Edmonton murders recently are related to mental health and homelessness. One victim was murdered as he slept on a bench. He was slated to move into his first home the next day after 20 years of living on the street.

The situation in which far too many aboriginals find themselves growing up fosters criminal activity and abuse. Why not respond to the myriad commission reports calling for increased investments in housing, in youth programs, in schools, and addictions counselling, and reduce the probability of yet more victims of crime? Why not invest in programs that may provide a ray of hope instead of legislation and policies that merely entrench despair?

The Auditor General and many others have offered constructive measures. It is time for the government to respond.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will no doubt know that the City of Edmonton is currently facing a murder epidemic. There have been 38 murders in the City of Edmonton in this calendar year alone, more than in any other city in Canada. I am curious as to why she and her party are opposed to the government's safe street and communities agenda, given that crime is out of control in the city in which both she and I live?

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Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware of the murder rate in my city and it is reprehensible. What Edmontonians want is action by the federal government and all governments, including the police forces and all government departments and agencies to prevent more violent crime. It provides little redress to the victim of a crime that we are going to incarcerate somebody after the fact.

As I mentioned, there is the very sad case of a mentally troubled individual allegedly causing a fire in a building and causing the death of someone. A number of homeless people are being murdered on the streets as they are sleeping. This calls for a much broader response than simply locking people up on a minimum mandatory sentence.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very sensitive to many of the comments made by New Democratic members on this bill. However, in the September 21 issue of the *Winnipeg Sun*, I was quite surprised to read the NDP government's position on this bill. Gord Mackintosh, whom I have known personally for a number of years, stated that they strongly urge all parties in Ottawa to support this crime bill and to support it expeditiously. In fact, Mr. Mackintosh indicated that the bill does not go far enough.

Has the NDP government caucus in Manitoba had any consultation with the member's caucus as to what its position actually is on Bill C-10? Could her party share with the House what those costs might be, for example, in the province of Manitoba?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the members of my caucus who are from Manitoba regularly speak to their provincial counterparts. I would not deign to step on their toes. I am busy enough dealing with the Alberta government.

I cannot speak to the details on that question except to say it is a pretty broad-brushed question to ask what further can be done in all the provisions of the bill. My colleagues have been very clear on the parts of the bill we do support, and that is to expedite the provisions relating to the protection of children from pornography and assault, and in fact to hold off on measures such as mandatory sentencing for youth who might be caught with five marijuana plants.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, mandatory minimums, which have been universally condemned by everyone with expertise in public policy and criminology, have now had an additional criticism laid against them from evidence in the United States. The *New York Times* reported on September 25 that mandatory minimums are now increasing plea bargains, that prosecutors are taking all the powers that judges used to have and it is actually resulting in criminals getting lighter sentences than they would have had, had their cases gone to trial.

I would be grateful for any comments from the member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues stated earlier, many in the U.S. government, both at the state and the federal levels, are raising questions about the past policies of the U.S. government and are moving toward the kind of measures we are proposing which are to prevent crime.

Indeed, we need to reconsider the elected members making the decisions on what the appropriate sentence should be and instead rely on the judges and prosecutors who hear the details of each case.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the excellent speech of my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona brought forward what is truly one of the parts of this legislation which the government has failed to talk about, which is the impact on aboriginal people.

Certainly my colleague has explained this at length, but I would like to hear more about how this legislation leaves out people who are often the most negatively impacted as a result of the inequality that exists in our society. They often end up in the correctional system without the services, without prevention, and without the needed supports. Obviously it is a major gap and we hear nothing about this from the government. It has a fiduciary obligation to first nations and aboriginal peoples.

I would certainly like to hear from the member how the government is letting go of that obligation and leaving aboriginal people out in the cold.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Churchill has been strident in the House in speaking on behalf of the rights and interests of aboriginal communities, including those in her own riding. She spoke out stridently against cutting the healing centre funding. There is no substance to the apology to our aboriginal communities, our first nations, if we do not come forward with substantive programs.

Absolutely, I have been sitting in here today and have heard no mention whatsoever of the consideration to our aboriginal Canadians. We need to be, not only in sentencing, giving due consideration to their plight and the impact on them from residential schools, their poverty and so forth. Also, we need to know what the government will do to invest in providing additional programs to help make aboriginal Canadians part of our economy.

• (1640)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I begin my statement today, I will say that, as a retired member of the RCMP, I am proud to be part of a government that is putting forth legislation to assist police officers across Canada in serious investigations. More so, I am extremely proud that we are putting the rights of victims of crime before that of the people who commit the crime.

I am very pleased today to have an opportunity to speak to the safe streets and communities act and also to talk a bit about the good work our government has been doing to keep our streets and communities safer for Canada's law-abiding families.

As we know, the legislation in this comprehensive bill, which encompasses nine bills that have been brought before Parliament at various times since 2007, is not new to Canadians. In fact, this legislation has already had 79 full hours of debate in this place and has been studied in committee for 123 hours. All together, that is more than eight straight days spent considering common sense legislation.

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Furthermore, in the election this past spring, we were very clear that, if elected, a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government would bring legislation before the House in this manner. I am pleased and proud that Canadians saw fit to give us a strong mandate to carry on with our work.

I am also hopeful that members of the opposition will do the right thing and help us pass this important legislation.

As several of my hon. colleagues have pointed out, since taking office our government has not wavered from our commitment to crack down on crime and continue working to put the safety and security of Canadians at the forefront of our law and order agenda.

Hon. members will know that our government told Canadians, when it was first elected, that we would do things differently than the previous Liberal government. In fact, we have taken action on a number of fronts.

We said we that would get tough on crime. We have delivered. We said that we would ensure that people convicted of serious gun crimes would be given serious sentences. We have delivered. We said that we would take action to give law enforcement the tools it needed to do its jobs. We have delivered. In fact, we have taken steps to augment police forces and to help in efforts to improve recruitment for law enforcement agencies. For example, in 2008, we committed \$400 million for the police officer recruitment fund to assist provinces and territories in hiring additional police officers.

That is a significant federal contribution to provincial and municipal policing costs over a five year period, and it supports the efforts of these jurisdictions to recruit new police officers in order to target local crimes and make communities safer.

On the legislative side, we have passed legislation targeting gang violence and organized crime by addressing issues such as gang murders, drive-by shootings and additional protection for police officers.

We have passed legislation to end the shameful practice of giving two for one or even three for one credit for criminals in pre-sentencing custody. This change will help ensure that offenders serve sentences that truly reflect the severity of their crimes.

We have also passed legislation to help reform the pardon system, and Bill C-10 contains further measures to eliminate pardons for serious crimes including those who sexually abuse the most vulnerable citizens in society, our children.

As well, we have passed legislation to strengthen the National Sex Offender Registry and the National DNA Data Bank in order to better protect our children and other vulnerable members of our society from sexual predators. This change means that police officers can now use the Sex Offender Registry as an effective tool to investigate and, hopefully, prevent crimes.

We also recently passed legislation that eliminates accelerated parole review, ensuring that drug dealers and white collar fraudsters are no longer eligible for release on day parole after one-sixth of their sentence.

We also have ended the faint hope clause so that persons convicted of first degree murder serve their entire parole eligibility period in prison.

Clearly, our government has done a lot to help ensure that criminals are fully held to account for their actions and to keep our streets and communities safe.

• (1645)

Over the last three years, our government has done what it said it would do to keep Canadians safe in their homes and communities. We have done that because we said that we would help the victims of those crimes. I will talk a bit about that now.

First, with a great deal of this legislation, we are recognizing the harm done to victims in this country by serious violent crime. We are delivering tangible action to help make them part of the corrections process, as well as help them to seek redress for what they have suffered.

As we know, the repercussions of crime extend far beyond the act that the victim of crime will suffer at the time. The repercussions extend for years into the future, causing financial, emotional and even psychological impacts. As well, for the victims of crime, regardless of how long one works to try to come to terms with what has happened, the act of crime and the long-lasting impact it has on the victims will, invariably, last a lifetime. With that act of crime, the victims' life, as they know it, is effectively taken from them and replaced with one of ongoing distress, the effect of which could be multiplied by the changes in conditions for their attacker. That is why the safe streets and communities act includes provisions to ensure that victims are actively included in the corrections process.

For example, the safe streets and communities act would enshrine in law a victim's participation in Parole Board of Canada hearings. That means it would be formally recognized that a victim must be included and heard in the process by which an offender is considered for conditional release into the community.

Also included in the safe streets and communities act are provisions that would ensure victims are kept better informed about what is happening with the offender in the corrections system. These provisions would specifically deal with how offenders are behaving while they are incarcerated, whether they are adhering to their correctional plan and if they are being transferred to a lower security institution. By keeping victims better informed about the behaviour, movements and potential release of offenders, we would ensure that victims are more fully engaged in the overall corrections process.

It is not as a mere formality or acknowledgement of what they have suffered. Ensuring that victims are actively involved in the corrections process is essential for both their healing and well-being. It also demonstrates to offenders the true nature of the harm they have done to society, which is a necessary part of the rehabilitation process.

Another way that safe streets and communities act is standing up for victims is the provision that would allow victims to sue perpetrators and supporters of terrorism and hold them accountable for their actions. The legislation would create an action where the victim could sue, in a Canadian court, an individual or a listed state that was responsible for actions of terrorism by which that individual had been directly affected. This is something in which Canada is leading the way and a new way in which criminals and terrorists could be held accountable and no longer act with impunity outside the law.

We hope that the opposition will support this legislation as we work to deliver better tools to help victims seek redress from the crimes committed against them. As well, by bringing victims more formally into the corrections process, it is our aim to protect the rights of victims and continue to take action to put the safety and security of Canadians, including victims, at the forefront of the way that corrections is handled in our great country.

I will end my speech by calling on the NDP to support this important legislation and stop its pattern of putting the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of law-abiding citizens.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say about the fact that, at its annual meeting on August 13 and 14, 2011, the Canadian Bar Association adopted a resolution that states:

...WHEREAS mandatory minimum sentences remove judicial discretion from the sentencing process, precluding sentencing judges from balancing all the factors of the case and imposing a one-size-fits-all solution to dispositions;

...WHEREAS mandatory minimum sentences disproportionately impact already disadvantaged populations, including Aboriginal people;

I would like to add youth to that.

I would like the hon. member to comment on the resolution adopted by the Canadian Bar Association.

[English]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, with regard to minimum sentencing, police officers across Canada have been looking forward to this legislation for a long time. They understand that there is a certain segment of society that requires incarceration and the bill would supply that to those people who need incarceration.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by citing a couple of quotes. The first quote comes from the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism on May 27, 1998, when he stated:

I begin by condemning this government for allowing itself to trample on democracy and democratic deliberation....

He was referring to time allocation, among other things.

This quote on June 10, 2003 comes from the member for Edmonton Southwest, who said:

The purpose of the institution of Parliament is supposed to be a deliberative assembly. When we shut down debate, we eliminate the whole purpose for the institution in the first place.

What is the government doing here? It has taken a bunch of bills and put them into one, which we call Bill C-10, and now it is putting

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a time limitation that prevents members of Parliament from being able to talk on each and every, what should be, separate bills. What would those members have said back then about government action?

I would suggest that what is being forced upon the opposition today is most unfair and not very well principled when it comes to the democratic principles of the House of Commons.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my speech, this legislation has already spent 79 full hours of debate in this place, not including today. It has been studied at committee for 123 hours for a total of 8 days. I believe that we have studied the bill long enough.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Kootenay—Columbia opened his remarks indicating support for the bill based on his experience as a retired RCMP officer. What specific measures in the bill would add to the police toolbox as they continue their fight against crime?

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, with regard to what will assist in this, certainly the sex offender registry data bank will help. Police officers across Canada would be able to follow where those people are if they should move. The DNA bank will also be very helpful for investigations should an offender commit a crime that needs to be determined at a later date. With DNA evidence, they can do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I heard my colleague call for the NDP to support this bill.

My question is very simple. Would the member agree to split up the bill so that we can speak with one voice on issues on which we all agree, and then try to build bridges for issues on which we are divided?

[English]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, since 2007, a number of these bills have come before the House and they have all been debated at great length. We believe it is time now, with Bill C-10, to push these forward.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising for the second time on this bill. As we are aware, the motion that is currently before the House is the one from the third party in the House. It recommends that the bill be deferred for an extended period of time for a number of reasons. With regard to that, it is an appropriate motion given the complexity of the bill, so it would be one that my party would be prepared to support.

It is obvious that the government will not to back off on this bill. Therefore, I would like to make a few other comments with regard to its approach, both what we have seen with the time allocation motion that it brought before and now passed in the House and the propensity for the Conservatives to further curtail debate in committee and perhaps when the bill comes back to the House at report stage and third reading. If this is any indication of the nature in which they will govern with a majority, it certainly strikes at the very foundation of the principles of democracy that the House is supposed to encompass. We will wait to see how the Conservatives will handle it at committee and when it comes back to the House, but I approach the bill in the way they have approached it, with a great deal of foreboding.

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With regard to the contents of the history of the bill itself, in its various other incarnations, we have heard the statistics about the amount of debate that has taken place on this. The interesting part is a number of the recommendations that were passed with majority votes in committee and in the House have been ignored by the government. That certainly does not bode well for the democracy in our country.

In particular, I want to address the bill that dealt with the sexual abuse of children. That part of the bill, which we see encompassed in the larger bill today, had a great deal of debate. We took a good deal of evidence at the justice committee and it ultimately came out of the justice committee with only a couple of minor amendments. The bill basically created several new offences, which had support from all four parties at that time. In fact, two of the major new endeavours in that regard, around criminalizing the luring of children and the grooming of children for potential sexual victims, came out of NDP private member's bills over a number of years, which the government had latched onto and encompassed into what was Bill C-54 in the last Parliament.

We were quite supportive of that. The use of grooming techniques is well known. Psychologists and psychiatrists have taught us very clearly what to look for in that regard. Therefore, both the NDP private member's bill and the government bill took that into account and prohibited a number of types of conduct and imposed penalties if that conduct was deemed to have occurred and people were convicted of it.

We had concerns with that part of Bill C-54 in the sense that there were unintended consequences that I believed would occur with the mandatory minimums that the Conservatives imposed. We rarely have judges who are prepared to not sentence people who are convicted of these sexual abuses of children to time in prison. The difficulty I had with the bill was that a number of the mandatory minimums, taking away that discretion from the court as to how to best and perhaps more severely deal with the offenders, were being taken away and very rigid penalties were being imposed. I believe in some cases the result would be that we would see judges hesitating to impose more severe penalties because the mandatory minimums had now been set by the legislature.

• (1655)

However, we ultimately concluded, as a party, that we would allow this bill to go forward because of the new crimes that were being committed. This is really where we were going to make our children, our grandchildren, safer, by prohibiting that kind of conduct and allowing our police, prosecutors and judges to identify, convict and sentence on those types of offences.

We were quite supportive of that.

Also additional provisions were given to the judges in terms of the type of penalties they could impose, expanding them from beyond just the penalties that sentence them to prisons, but to also, when they came out, limiting access to the Internet, for instance. Only under supervised circumstances would they be able to have access to children. Those provisions were badly needed to expand the ability of our judges to control conduct after a person was released. Those were very good provisions, again, ones that we had suggested earlier on.

We are quite supportive of that kind of approach. Again, I have some reservation with regard to the mandatory minimums because they may have just the opposite consequence of what the government intends.

However, it is more important to get that law into place. Therefore, I ask for the unanimous consent of this House to move the following motion: That the provisions of Bill C-10, an act to enact the justice for victims of terrorism act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other acts with respect to sexual offences against children, and consisting of clauses 10 to 31, 35 to 38 and 42-9, do compose Bill C-10B; that the remaining provisions in Bill C-10 do compose Bill C-10A; that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary; that Bill C-10A and C-10B be reprinted; and that Bill C-10B be deemed to have been read the first time and be printed, deemed read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment and deemed read the third time and passed.

The effect of this is to get that part of the bill on sexual offences against children into legislation much faster so our police, prosecutors and judges can use it to protect our children, as opposed to having to wait for we do not know how many more months before Bill C-10, as a whole, comes back to the House for final debate and/or passage.

Our intent is entirely clear on this. We want this done now. We do not want to wait another number of months. The bill sat in the Senate for a while after it passed the House, a Senate that was controlled by the government. Then we had the election and it died. We do not want to waste any more time on this. We are quite supportive of getting this bill through today, tomorrow at the latest, and on to the Senate.

That is the intent of the motion, and I would seek unanimous consent of the House to pass it today.

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with the hon. for Windsor—Tecumseh on the justice committee.

He talked about his concern regarding minimum mandatory sentences, saying that they might actually have the opposite effect of what the government contemplated. The example he cited was that they might actually preclude the judges from giving higher sentences than what is in the minimum mandatory.

I am perplexed by that and I want to challenge him. The current Criminal Code has maximum penalties for every offence and the judges do not use as the benchmark. They tailor a sentence in the appropriate range.

Why is he fearful that the minimum mandatory might become a ceiling rather than a floor?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I disagree with his analysis of the law, at this point, and the sentencing practices in our courts. The maximum penalties in our code are very clearly seen quite rigidly by our judges as the maximum they will go to. They will not tailor it below, but they are very clearly saying, "Where does it fit in this range?"

For this kind of offence, if the legislature says that the minimum penalty at the low end should be six months, as a judge I think the low end should be a year. However, what has happened, and I say this, as well, from the perspective of legislation like this that has passed in the United States, the tendency has been that the judges there have tended to stick fairly rigidly to the mandatory minimums when it is at the low end.

I want to make this final point before we go on to other questions. We have excellent judges in our country. I am not saying many of them would do this, but I think some of them would fall into that trap.

• (1705)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier in a question I referred to an article by Mr. Peter Blaikie, a very distinguished Canadian lawyer, founding partner of Heenan Blaikie and a former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. I would like to quote from his article again and get the member's reaction to it. He said:

The [Prime Minister's] government wants to send more Canadian young offenders to jail and for longer periods of time, no doubt creating more recidivists. One twice-jailed young offender had the following comments on the legislation:

"For the most part, harsh sentences do not deter crime and actually work against rehabilitating offenders. My brief time in incarceration only ensconced me more deeply in the criminal culture."

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, we know that deterrence generally does not work with regard to young offenders.

Every study that we have ever seen, and the government has never been able to produce one to the contrary, has indicated that with regard to young offenders, because of their age, their immaturity, deterrence does not work at all. Everybody agrees, even most government members. Yet Bill C-10 contains provisions that would open the door, even if only a crack, and reintroduce the deterrent concept, which has been ruled against all the way up to the Supreme Court. If that part of the bill goes through, it will eventually be struck down by the Supreme Court.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his work not only on the bill before us but on several others.

It is important to get his reflections on what has just taken place. My colleague offered a reasonable solution in an effort to advance the cause of protecting children in our society. He suggested that part of this legislation be moved to the Senate. It needs to be highlighted that the Conservatives have denied that consent, yet we have done

this before in the past. There have been many times when unanimous consent moved issues through the House. Would he reflect on that?

We try to find some common ground here in the House. I cannot understand what excuse the government could provide for not protecting children sooner. That is exactly what would take place. Would he comment on that because it is a tactic that has been used in the House by all parties at different times? It is unsettling that we are not getting that movement right now.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I actually meant to mention this in my opening remarks.

We just did this in June in the House because of a decision in a Quebec court to turn loose, under a cloud, 30-plus Hells Angels because it was going to take too long. The government agreed with us at the time that we needed the megatrial bill immediately. It was not the government's suggestion; it was ours. The government came onside.

It is more important that we look at the experience we had in the Homolka pardon case in the spring of 2010. We had to fight tooth and nail to sever off part of the bill that would have prevented Ms. Homolka from getting a pardon. It was our work. The member for Welland in particular worked very hard on this. He spoke to the family. We managed to get that through.

I do not know why the government is refusing today to take those extra steps. It is quite simple. This is not an unusual procedure that I have proposed. It is quite easy to do this. We could get the bill in place in the next week or two and protect our children more adequately.

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House of Commons this evening to speak on second reading of Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act.

I would like to add to the comments made by my friend, the hon. Minister of Justice, with respect to the provisions in Bill C-10 that would ensure individuals who sexually abuse children serve sentences that reflect the severity of their heinous crimes committed against the most vulnerable and defenceless members of society.

Over the duration of my almost 40 years of practical experience in law enforcement, I have played a leading role in helping protect victims of child abuse and exploitation.

Canadians have long supported this government's efforts to put the plight of victims ahead of the rights of criminals. The commitment was made in the June 1, 2004 document entitled "Demand Safer Communities", the Conservative plan for Canada's criminal justice system, wherein it stated:

—prohibit conditional sentences for child sex offences to ensure that all of those charged with these offences will serve prison time and be removed from the community.

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Our government has listened to the plight of victims and law-abiding Canadians. Our government has received successive strengthened mandates from Canadians to pass these long-needed reforms to give law enforcement and victims the upper hand.

That is why I am honoured to rise as a member of this government today. We are delivering on the promise to Canadians by working to pass this important legislation without further delay.

One of the other objectives of our legislation to address child sexual exploitation is preventing the commission of a contact sexual offence against a child in the first place. It does so by proposing two new offences, and proposing to require courts to consider imposing two new specific conditions that would serve to prevent a suspected or convicted child sex offender from engaging in conduct that could facilitate their sexual offending.

These proposals remain as originally introduced in former Bill C-54. The first new offence would prohibit anyone from providing sexually explicit material to a young person for the purpose of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence against that young person. This practice is often used by child sex offenders to groom their victims to make it easier to sexually exploit their victims.

This conduct is already prohibited where the material consists of child pornography, but if the material in question depicts adults engaged in explicit sexual activity, the Criminal Code does not currently prohibit this use of material. This does not meet the very high threshold of the legal definition of obscene material under section 163 of the Criminal Code.

This current definition only applies to depictions of explicit sexual activity coupled with violence or that are judicially determined to be degrading or dehumanizing. Clearly, this creates a gap in our criminal law, and Bill C-10 represents an appropriate and reasonable response to that gap.

This new offence would carry a penalty similar to that of the existing obscenity/corruption morals offence in section 163, namely a maximum of six months imprisonment on summary conviction and two years imprisonment on an indictable offence. It would impose a mandatory minimum of 30 days on summary conviction and 90 days on an indictable, more serious criminal offence.

The second new offence proposed by Bill C-10 would prohibit anyone from using telecommunications to agree or make arrangements with another person to commit a sexual offence against a child. Again, this new offence would fill a gap in the current law.

Currently, the offence of luring a child, section 172 of the Criminal Code, prohibits using a computer system to communicate directly with a child for the purposes of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence against that child. This offence does not apply where the communication does not directly involve the child victim.

The new offence uses the term "telecommunications" which is defined by section 2 of the Federal Interpretation Act as the emission, transmission or reception of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds or intelligence of any nature by any wire, cable, radio, optical or other electromagnetic system, or by any similar technical system.

• (1710)

In my view, this broad definition and approach ensures that the new offence will apply to the same prohibited use of any new technology that may be created after this offence is enacted. This new offence would operate in a manner similar to the existing luring a child offence under section 172.1 of the Criminal Code. For example, both contain the same provisions about presumed or reasonable but mistaken belief in the age of a child. Both preserve the common law defence of entrapment for an accused in the appropriate circumstances, and both would carry the same penalties, a mandatory minimum of 90 days and a maximum of 18 months imprisonment on summary conviction and a mandatory minimum of one year and a maximum of 10 years imprisonment on an indictable offence.

Bill C-10 proposes to add these two new offences to schedule 1 of the Criminal Records Act. Individuals convicted of these new offences would be ineligible to apply for a record suspension, currently known as a pardon and which part 3 of Bill C-10 proposes to rename as a record suspension.

Bill C-10 also includes former Bill C-54's proposals to expand the powers of a court to prohibit a convicted child sex offender, under section 161, and a suspected child sex offender, under section 810.1, from engaging in conduct that could facilitate their commission of one of the enumerated child sexual or abduction offences.

Specifically, these proposals would broaden the list of offences for which these conditions may be imposed to include the four child procuring prostitution offences in section 212. These are described in the actual words in the Criminal Code. It would also direct a court to consider imposing a condition prohibiting the offender from having any unsupervised access to a young person or from having any unsupervised use of the Internet.

The objective of these conditions is self-evident. If we deny a known or suspected child sex offender access to a child or from having access to a tool such as the Internet that can enable that person to sexually exploit a child, then hopefully we can prevent the victimization of yet other victims.

As chief of the London police force, I led an investigation into a network of individuals involved in child sexual abuse and exploitation. I believe that we must do better. In these circumstances, I can relate the statement of a 15-year old victim. In referring to his victimizer he said, "He preys on street kids. He'll feed them, give them drugs, money. He doesn't even care what he's done. He couldn't care less about any one of the kids, including myself".

Bill C-10 proposes welcomed reforms to better protect Canadians, particularly to better protect vulnerable children and youth against sexual abuse and exploitation.

As I have noted, many of these proposals were previously debated and studied in the previous Parliament. Accordingly, I think all members should be able to work together to ensure the expeditious enactment of these long-needed reforms. If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

It has been stated that even in the most ungoverned kingdoms, animals protect their young. We collectively, as a responsible society, can do no less to protect our children from those who seek to sexually violate them.

There has been a lot of talk and discussion about the role of judges, and there are judges who really, I believe, have captured the significance of what it is that we are talking about in terms of the imperative need for us to rise to equip our police officers, the courts, and the system as a whole, to better protect vulnerable people, especially our children.

● (1715)

I wish to quote Mr. Justice Moldaver from the Ontario Court of Appeal. Adjudicating with his colleagues over a case, he stated:

While...the offender's prospects for rehabilitation will always warrant consideration, the objectives of denunciation, deterrence, and the need to separate sexual predators from society for society's well-being and the well-being of our children must take precedence.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, the government presents an omnibus bill which packs nine bills into one and then it limits debate. The moment an hon. member on our side presents a motion that would seek to expedite the passing of the very part of the legislation that the hon. member opposite is speaking to, the government decides to stall.

I want to ask the hon. member opposite, how can he justify that action?

● (1720)

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, the justification that all Canadians would very much appreciate is everybody getting their act together, quit all the back and forth, and pass this very important piece of legislation.

It is critically important to law enforcement officers if we want them to do the job that they are mandated to do. It is critical to the courts and it is critical to society, especially to vulnerable people.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the hon. minister's speech today and congratulate him for many years of service in the OPP, the London police force and elsewhere, but I am surprised at the answer he gave to the previous question because it seems to me the point of the questions was that if there are parts of the bill which the opposition is prepared to support and expedite, why would the government not want to do that?

The minister said to get this moving, get it going, and get the measures that he is talking about today moving forward. That is what my hon. colleague who spoke a moment ago was talking about exactly.

I do not comprehend why the minister would not say yes, that is the right move. Why, when there are other issues in this bill that opposition members in both parties, enough that he is not concerned about, why not separate the bill? It is a huge, omnibus piece of

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legislation. Why not separate it and move forward quickly with so many of the measures on which there is agreement?

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, we need to realize that many of these things have been debated, up, down and sideways, certainly in the previous Parliament, namely Bill C-54.

We feel very strongly that what we have put together is a response to the mandate that has been given to us by the Canadian people. We campaigned on these issues. We are fulfilling our responsibility, our mandate, and our accountability to the people who sent us here.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Associate Minister of National Defence for his excellent contribution to the debate.

He mentioned his many years of law enforcement, for which he has been recognized.

I am quite certain he probably talks to some of his law enforcement friends from time to time and I am curious, through those informal consultations, what information he has been able to gather concerning the appropriateness and the effectiveness of this impending legislation?

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, the impact will be significant in terms of our ability to fill gaps that now exist. Our ability to better protect, especially, as I indicated, children, but more so dealing with the current and emerging threats that we all have to deal with and about which we all have to be concerned, including terrorism.

At the end of the day, and I know there is a lot of talk about the impact on offenders, one of the best forms of crime prevention is to ensure that recidivist criminals are locked up, and that is what we intend to do.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for the minister.

My understanding is that if we compare a child predator, who is trying to get a child to do something such as watch pornographic movies, to someone who gets caught growing six marijuana plants, there is a stricter penalty or consequence for the individual who is growing the marijuana. Is that not correct? If so, would he agree that something is wrong there?

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, with respect to my friend's interpretation of what is intended here, first and foremost the growing of six plants is for the purpose of trafficking. It is vastly different from what the member is suggesting.

No one is looking at comparing crime in the context of the experience that I and my colleagues have had. We are talking about those who traffic in marijuana; six plants is the number that has been calculated, but I also know people who have trafficked one plant.

I do not see how one could ignore the fact that the criterion is that of trafficking, as opposed to just growing it for personal use, even though some people may frame it that way.

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● (1725)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: that the provisions of Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts respecting support for victims and consisting of clauses 52, 55, 96 through 98, and clause 130, do compose Bill C-10B; that the remaining provisions in Bill C-10 do compose Bill C-10A; that the clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary; that Bill C-10A and Bill C-10B be reprinted; and that Bill C-10B be deemed to have been read the first time and be printed, deemed read the second time and referred to the committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment and deemed read the third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker, we are proposing this motion to move forward those sections of the omnibus bill that would provide support for victims, including broadening the definition of a victim, allowing the inclusion of victim impact statements at parole hearings and providing enhanced notification to victims regarding parole board hearings as well as other measures that support victims.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I do not think that is a point of order.

Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this manner?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is no consent.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York West

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been able to squeeze my name in among many others so that I can speak to Bill C-10 and talk about what is good about it as well as all the concerns we have about it. I am glad that I was able to get in, given the fact that we have closure before us.

Just over a week ago the Minister of Justice introduced his highly politicized Bill C-10. Now, after only a couple of hours of debate, the government has moved to shut down democratic discussion on the bill, in the very House of democracy.

This bill is actually nine previous bills jumbled together in a way that must make U.S. Republicans green with envy. Let us imagine nine bills going through with no debate. Yes, we are supportive of parts of those nine bills, but to put them forward in one huge bill and expect us to pass them in less than the two weeks that we have been in this House is a real insult to democracy and an insult to all of us as parliamentarians here to do a job. With some of it we have no problem, but to turn around and have it proceeding in such a short period of time without full debate and input from all of us is a true disservice.

If I were to listen to the government, it would seem that crime is rampant and out of control in the cities, towns, villages and hamlets of Canada. The government, perched on its white horse, says it is

prepared to ride to our rescue. What does that actually mean in real legislation?

Despite the rhetoric and the fearmongering from our friends across the way, which is something we are all guilty of in this House on various pieces of legislation, Statistics Canada seems to have a different take when it comes to crime rates.

In a report released earlier this year, Statistics Canada stated that police-reported crime reached its lowest levels since the early 1970s. It goes on to say that the police-reported crime rate, which measures the overall volume of crime, continued to decline right up until last year. In fact, last year it was down 5%, reaching its lowest level since 1973, which is something we are all thrilled about. We are pleased that it has gone down to that extent.

Would we like to wipe it out altogether? Of course we would, but we also have to be practical. There are various issues here that have to be addressed as we all try to reduce crime in this country. It is as low as it is as a result of the many crime prevention programs introduced through the Liberal years that we were here.

That same Statistics Canada report says that violent crime is at its lowest since 1999. Last year both the volume and severity of violent crime fell 3% from the previous year, while the decline in the violent crime severity index was more notably down 6%.

This is the fourth straight year when there has been a decline in the violent crime severity index, and it is the largest drop in more than a decade.

Overall, violent crimes accounted for just one in five offences. Among the violence crimes that saw a significant decline were attempted murder, down 14%; homicide, down 10%; robbery, down 7%; and serious assault, down 5%.

That is where we all want to see it, going down, which is what raises the question of why we have Bill C-10 bundled up with nine pieces of legislation and then rushed through this parliamentary session.

We know that Bill C-10 is not on the table because of actual evidence. There has been no evidence presented to tell us exactly why it is important for us to cram this through and why we cannot have full debate through the House and through committee stages. The Conservatives want to scare people by painting a picture of crime that is clearly, in their opinion, out of control, because it fits the ideology of the Republicans and of the Conservative government.

I am prepared, as are many of my colleagues, to support measures that actually tackle real crime with balance and focus. Bill C-10 is not that.

For example, as my colleague just mentioned, this legislation suggests minimum penalties for certain drug crimes that are harsher than those for certain sexually driven crimes involving children. We have to look at both of those and try to see where there is a balance. I would suspect that any crime involving children and sexual activity would have the harshest of penalties applied.

• (1730)

Instead there seems to be a difference in how that would be applied. We do not support the idea of someone growing marijuana plants either, but it certainly should not have a stricter penalty, or at least both of them should be at the appropriate level. If we are truly talking about protecting the vulnerable, we have to do far more than what is written in Bill C-10.

The real challenge ahead of us is that the bill proposes to spend billions of dollars on a crime and punishment agenda that will do little or nothing to tackle crime and punishment. Despite the billions of dollars being spent on Bill C-10, it fails the real issues of tackling poverty, homelessness, financial illiteracy, income security, and education. Almost 99% of what we see in the crime agenda is a result of those issues. No job, no education, homelessness, drugs and mental illness are usually the key issues that get people into those crime situations. Experts tell us that any real effort to prevent crime must start with an effort to stamp out hopelessness and fear.

It appears as though Bill C-10 is covered with the fingerprints of U.S. Republicans. The Americans have one of the highest rates of incarceration on the planet, and they are starting to see that a system based only on punishment is a failure. As much as it might make us feel good to lock people up, the reality is that it does not appear to work in all of the cases.

Let me quote from a recent U.S. editorial with regard to crime and prisons. It states:

California spends more money on prisons than on higher education. The governor is right—we've got it backwards and it's time to reverse course.

Only 68% of our high school students are graduating. Yet we pay prison guards substantially more than teachers.

Fear of crime led us to vote for long prison terms and the three strikes law. We didn't intend to spend \$4 billion more on prisons than colleges...

The less educated our workforce...the more we feed the prisons.

It's time to admit our mistakes and make tough decisions. By pumping so much money into prisons, we're starving education. We cannot afford the consequences.

That was a quote from an editorial in a newspaper in the United States, and it spells out exactly the direction we are going.

We are pleading with the government not to go down that route. Let us look at this. Let us take some time to make sure that Bill C-10 goes in the right direction. Let it go to committee and let it have full hearings and a full debate. We all want to ensure safety on our streets and in our communities. No one thinks any differently, but we really have our heads in the sand if we think that bundling it all up and pretending it is going to solve all the problems is really going to make that happen.

That is not what we want, and I am sure none of the other members in the House want it. Locking someone up forever does not eliminate crime. Locking someone up forever does not make us any safer. Locking someone up does not help those who have been victimized by criminals either. Locking someone up forever is an after-the-fact system that does little to address the root causes of crime.

I believe we can do better. We can tackle poverty, homelessness and joblessness. We can make our streets safer for our children and

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families. We can replace fear with hope, but Bill C-10 is not the way to do this.

The Conservatives cite their majority in the House as a justification for why the bill is worth passing. That is not a valid reason. On this side of the House we are willing to work with the government to pass a crime bill that strikes at the root causes of crime, helps victims get back on their feet and punishes offenders appropriately for their misdeeds.

Bill C-10 ignores evidence and does not produce any facts. It creates an illusion that crime is out of control and it fails to provide any information on the real costs of implementation. Bill C-10 does not reflect the values of Canadians as a smart, caring society, and it would do nothing to address crime in this country.

Bill C-10 is not an omnibus crime bill, it is an ominous crime bill, because it signals a shift toward an approach to crime that has failed in places like the United States. If we adopt Bill C-10 as it is, we are adopting a failed approach.

I, for one, have grave concerns with not only the financial impact, but the real agenda is to make our communities and our streets safer. Bill C-10 has some merit in some parts, and there are areas we would like to support, but clearly work has to be done.

• (1735)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly want to thank the hon. member for York West for her contribution in this debate.

I am always amazed when opponents of our safe streets and safe community agenda cherry-pick statistics to oppose our legislation. I say "cherry-pick" deliberately because if we pick 1970 as a reference point official crime statistics are down. However, if we pick 1960 as a reference point they are up and they are up considerably.

More relevantly, I wonder if the hon. member knows that in 2009 one in four Canadians reported being a victim of a crime and only 31% of those people reported those crimes to the police.

The real issue is not if crime is up or down. It is whether the level is tolerable. In 2010, even official police statistics showed two million crimes in Canada, 440,000 of which were violent.

Are those acceptable numbers?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, in my mind no crime is tolerable, period. Frankly, if I could wave a magic wand we would not have any crime. However, that does not work and we all know that. We live in a world where statistics matter and we need evidence to back up what we are moving forward.

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I would rather see more money go into policing to provide support for the men and women who keep our streets and our country safe, crime prevention, and ensuring there is housing so that people are not living on the streets. A big important part is the whole issue of mental health. All of us who work daily in our communities know that a number of people who are out there causing part of this crime are seriously ill. That is an area the House has yet to tackle. We talk a lot about it but we have yet to put the investment into truly helping people who are suffering from mental health illness.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague.

In all of the research she has done, is there a single modern state, in North America or Europe, that has a tough on crime policy and that has seen crime rates decrease more quickly than in a neighbouring state? Or, on the contrary, are there not examples where the tough on crime policy slowed a decrease in the crime rate or even caused an increase?

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, let me be very clear. We should be very tough on crime. We all want those who are violent offenders or sexual predators to be dealt with as severely as the system allows.

The issue is what about all of the people who for whatever reason find themselves in a situation where they have no money and commit a robbery? Without question there should be an appropriate penalty for every crime, not just lock people in prison for two or three years.

I visited Mimico, a reformatory system in Toronto. It was filled with young people. I wondered what they would be like when they came out. From everything I hear, once they go into those kinds of facilities they always come out tougher, hardened and more disillusioned with life.

We have to spend more time figuring out how we can stay ahead of that. That means ensuring that our local police services have all the support they need, that we have crime prevention programs and that we invest in our communities.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask my hon. colleague from York West to talk about the overall costs of this tough-on-crime approach which a previous member said a moment ago has been found elsewhere not to work. In fact, he found that crime had increased as a result of these policies. California is a good example of that.

I would like to hear her comments.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, I alluded to the California issue. We need to look at exactly what went on there and why it probably has the highest incarceration rate in the world. It is out of control. California does not have any money to balance its budgets or to put into education.

Clearly, if we use what was done in California as an example, that is exactly the direction in which Bill C-10 appears to be taking us.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

Bill C-10 is comprehensive legislation that addresses a number of serious issues that are in front of mind for this government and for all Canadians.

It proposes legislative reforms to strengthen our existing responses to: child sexual abuse and exploitation as well as serious drug, violent and property crimes found in part 2, clauses 10 to 51; terrorism, found in part 1, clauses 2 to 9; violent young offenders, part 4, clauses 167 to 204; offender accountability and management, part 3, clauses 52 to 166; and the protection of vulnerable foreign workers against abuse and exploitation, part 5, clauses 205 to 207.

There can be no question that this is an important package of reforms. That is why we must take our task as lawmakers seriously, and study and pass these proposals to ensure the safety of all Canadians.

Bill C-10 compiles the reforms that were included in nine bills that were before the previous Parliament which died on the order paper with the dissolution of that Parliament for the general election. Former Bill C-4, Sébastien's Law (Protecting the Public from Violent Young Offenders) is now in part 4 of Bill C-10. Former Bill C-5, Keeping Canadians Safe (International Transfer of Offenders) Act is now in part 3. Former Bill C-16, Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act is now in part 2. Former Bill C-23B, Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act is now in part 3. Former Bill C-39, Ending Early Release for Criminals and Increasing Offender Accountability Act is now in part 3. Former Bill C-54, Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act is now in part 2. Bill C-56, Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act is now in part 5. Former Bill C-59, Abolition of Early Parole Act is now in part 3. Former Bill S-7, Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act is now in part 1. Former Bill S-10, Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act is now in part 2.

Many of these former bills were previously debated, studied and some were even passed by the House of Commons. Therefore, they should easily be supported again in this Parliament.

I would like to focus the balance of my remarks on the proposals in Bill C-10 to better protect children against sexual exploitation, that being those reforms now in part 2 of this legislation that were previously in Bill C-54 in the last session of Parliament.

The reforms build on the government's well-established commitment and track record in delivering concrete measures tackling violent crime, and in particular to safeguard children against violent sexual offenders. For example, the Tackling Violent Crime Act, 2008 raised the age of consent of sexual activity from 14 to 16 years to better protect Canadian youth against adult sexual predators. It also better protected all Canadians against dangerous offenders by providing police, crown prosecutors and the courts with much needed tools to more effectively manage the threat posed by individuals who were at high risk of reoffending sexually and violently.

While it is true that our existing criminal laws addressing child sexual abuse and exploitation are already comprehensive and robust, there is always room for improvement. We should never be complacent in ensuring that we are doing all we can to safeguard such a vulnerable segment of the Canadian population.

This point is underscored by Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics *Juristat* article "Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2010", released on July 21, 2011, which reported increases in the rates of child pornography offences as up 36% and sexual assault as up 5%.

• (1745)

The proposed reforms in Bill C-10 are both timely and welcome. They address clear gaps in our existing laws. The address the gap created by inconsistent penalties for sexual assault offences where the victim is a child and the gap that now exists because some of the preparatory conduct engaged in by child sex offenders is not criminalized. They fill a gap in our existing measures to help prevent known or suspected child sex offenders from engaging in conduct that could facilitate their sexual offences.

The proposals in Bill C-10 seek to ensure that all sexual offences involving a child are treated equally, seriously and consistently. They do so by: proposing to impose new mandatory minimum penalties for offences involving child victims that currently do not carry minimum penalties; increasing the mandatory minimum penalties for some child sex offences that are already imposed; and, by increasing the maximum penalties on some other offences. Once these reforms are enacted, there would be a consistent approach to sentencing in all sexual assault cases involving child victims.

Child sexual assault could be charged under any of the child-specific sexual offences or under the general sexual assault offences that also apply to adult victims. Currently, 12 but not all child-specific sexual offences impose mandatory minimum penalties and none of the general sexual assault offences impose mandatory minimum penalties.

In practice, this means that the overwhelming majority of child sexual assault cases do not carry mandatory minimum sentences. This is because the majority of child sexual offences are charged under the general sexual assault offence in section 271, which does not currently impose a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment. That is 80% of all child sex offences charged in 2008. The source of this information is Statistics Canada's Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, UCR2. It is very current data.

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If we take as our starting point the universally shared view that all child sexual abuse must be strongly condemned and that mandatory minimum penalties are exceptional in the Criminal Code and are reserved for those crimes that Parliament determines must be strongly denounced and deterred, it should be obvious to all that the current use of mandatory minimum sentences for some but not all sexual offences involving child victims is just wrong. That sends a message to some victims that their experience of sexual assault is less serious than that of other child victims. It also sends a message to child sex offenders that they should try to plea bargain for charges under offences that do not impose mandatory minimum penalties.

Bill C-10 contains fundamental legislative safeguards for all Canadians. I call upon the opposition members to put an end to their attempts to obstruct the bill and to support our efforts to keep Canadians safe.

• (1750)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member opposite invites us to take our job as lawmakers and parliamentarians seriously, which is why the limitation on debate of this huge omnibus bill is so egregious.

The member opposite listed all the reasons that the House should unanimously support the component around child exploitation and sexual assault. Perhaps the hon. member was not in the House when my hon. colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh rose to say that we indeed do support that part of the legislation. In fact, it should be expedited. We could have that part of the bill passed in 48 hours if the government would stop stalling.

Could the member opposite explain why the government is stalling on that part of the legislation?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Madam Speaker, the elements in the bill and the laws in the bill were already debated in this House. Now we want to put them through so Canadians can be safe.

When we stand in this Parliament and look around at what Canadians expect us to do as lawmakers, we do need to take our jobs very seriously. In the past election, Canadians overwhelmingly gave us a mandate to push these bills forward, bills that we could not get through in the last Parliament.

Now, to enable that to happen, they have gone into one bill. They have been debated and some have even been passed in the House. Now it is time to get on with the job and get this done.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not claim, by any means, to be an expert in matters related to crime. I studied a little bit at law school and have not done much in relation to it since.

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However, I respect the view of Mr. Peter Blaikie, who is a distinguished Canadian lawyer and a former president of the Progressive Conservative Party. Earlier this year, he said:

Why is the tough-on-crime policy so appallingly bad?

Perhaps most bizarrely, it runs counter to all the statistical evidence of significantly falling crime rates over the past 25 years. It rejects not only the expert evidence of those involved in the criminal-justice system directly, including the Correctional Service of Canada, but also that of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and others.

What expertise does my hon. colleague have that she knows better than those folks?

• (1755)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Madam Speaker, in my humble opinion, I am a parliamentarian and do not profess to know better than anybody else. What I do know is that for the better part of 10 years I have worked with victims of crime. As recently as two weeks ago in Toronto, I was talking to a young girl who was sexually assaulted. She was trafficked. She is hidden now. She said quite clearly that she would not report the crime because they will just get off anyway.

Nobody talks about that on the opposite side in this Parliament.

My experience, working with victims of crime for 10 years, touches my heart and it causes me to move forward. Apart from that, I worked very closely with ICE units and other police officers. My own son was in the ICE unit. He is part of the RCMP.

I do not expect that I could profess to be an expert or a lawyer. I do have nine years of university and I know a lot about mathematics and science because that is where my expertise is. However, as a human being, I do know that when a child is afraid to report a crime something is very wrong with the laws. We need to take our jobs seriously as lawmakers and move forward to get this job done.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I stand today in the House in opposition to the proposed Bill C-10, cleverly titled the safe streets and communities act. I say “cleverly titled” because there is certainly no consensus that the proposed changes to the Criminal Code would make Canada's streets and communities any safer than they already are. This is because this bill relies on the false pretense that increased incarceration rates necessarily lead to lower crime rates.

Sadly, when drafting this crime bill, the Conservatives have ignored the evidence. Crime rates in Canada are at a 20-year low and, despite the claim by Conservative colleagues that there has been a sharp rise in unreported crime, the reality does not reflect their over the top rhetoric.

The international examples of countries that employ a similar crime model demonstrate why such an approach is not one that Canada should be adopting. We can take, for instance, the United States. Since undertaking similar crime policies during Ronald Reagan's tenure as president, federal incarceration rates have skyrocketed with the prison population, nearly doubling over a 15-year period. Yet, in spite of the doubling of the prison population, the overall crime rate in the United States has remained relatively stagnant. This underscores the idea that deterrence through wide-scale incarceration is not an effective crime prevention strategy. If anything, it only exacerbates the problem.

In the California penal system, inmates are being double and sometimes even triple bunked, often in recreational areas of the prison, such as cafeterias and gyms. They also lack adequate access to rehabilitation and mental health treatment, something that has a great effect on the rates of recidivism. Even notable Republican, Newt Gingrich, has recently reversed course and publicly criticized the U.S.'s tough on crime approach as being counterproductive to the real goal of reducing overall crime rates.

Why then are the Conservatives leading us down the path that other governments are beginning to abandon? Has the abject failure of this approach in the U.S. taught the government nothing?

Another aspect of Bill C-10 that worries me is who would be caught in the wide-ranging dragnet of this bill. Of particular concern is the effect this legislation would have on persons with mental health issues and serious drug abuse problems. Under the current system of drug sentencing, judges have discretion when issuing sentences. This means that judges can weigh all factors when determining the appropriate sentence, particularly whether the accused has a mental health issue or substance abuse problem. By removing this judicial discretion from the sentencing process, we would be stacking the deck against persons suffering from mental illness and substance abuse. Instead of giving these groups the treatment they need, we would be locking them up in an environment that often fosters and worsens their illness.

I have heard from many of my constituents in the riding of Sudbury who have singled out the effects that this bill would have on these vulnerable groups and they have asked me to oppose this bill for that very reason.

Furthermore, although my Conservative colleagues claim that this bill would target serious organized crime groups in Canada, I fear that, as is often the case in the United States, it will be the low hanging fruit that will be caught in the crosshairs. All indications suggest that the vast majority of the people who would be affected by the proposed changes are not the Hell's Angels, not groups like the Rizzutos and, ultimately, not the people who would generally be defined as “organized crime”. Instead, the vast majority are small-time, low threat, non-violent offenders. Should we really be expending finite budgetary resources to incarcerate people who represent very little threat to public safety in Canada? I and millions of Canadians believe not.

For instance, the inclusion of a mandatory minimum sentencing provision for persons caught cultivating more than five marijuana plants highlights the failure of this legislation to strike an appropriate balance between public safety and a rational model of crime prevention.

• (1800)

I agree that large scale, clandestine grow-op operations are a problem in Canada. It is unfair for homeowners who have unwittingly bought homes that were once used as grow-ops. They need to be protected. However, to create a regime where a teenager growing six plants in his or her parents' basement would face the same mandatory minimum jail sentence as organized crime groups involved with large scale operations, fails to properly differentiate between real and perceived threats to public safety.

Speaking of real versus perceived threats to public safety, the bill would see tougher sentences for persons caught cultivating marijuana than persons convicted of certain sexual offences against children.

I will quote Serj Tankian, who said:

All research and successful drug policy shows
That treatment should be increased,
And law enforcement decreased,
While abolishing mandatory minimum sentences,

I also take particular issue with the approach of packaging such a large volume of legislative changes to the Criminal Code into one massive omnibus bill. There are aspects of the bill that I believe are legitimate and useful, but because of the way it has been presented, I am obliged to vote against it. It seems that the Minister of Justice has taken an all or nothing, take it or leave it approach with this legislation. Either Canadians take the bad with the good or we get nothing at all.

This is not the approach that Canadians expect their elected representatives to take. Canadians expect members of Parliament to have nuanced debates to deal with specific legislative issues. The packaging of nine pieces of legislation into one bill shortchanges Canadian democracy and makes it impossible for me to support specific changes to the Criminal Code, which I would support were they introduced individually.

A 10-minute speech barely allows me to scratch the surface of this legislation. That speaks to the fact that bundling so many unrelated changes into the Criminal Code shortchanges Canadians.

Something that deeply disturbs me is the fact that the minister responsible has failed to provide Canadians with adequate cost estimates relating to the implementation of the bill. Canadians are living in a time of great economic uncertainty and yet the minister is unable to answer even the most basic questions about how much this would cost to implement. It begs the question about how the Conservatives can be trusted to preside over Canada's overall economic prosperity when they cannot provide an accurate cost estimate of legislation that they have had in their back pocket for close to six years.

As an administrator in my past life, I understand the need for financial and budgetary transparency, so this leaves me asking a few very important questions. How many new prisons would be required to house the thousands of Canadians that would be criminalized by this legislation? What are the administrative costs associated with prosecuting thousands of additional criminal proceedings? How much of this burden would be borne on the backs of provinces

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already struggling with budgetary restrictions and tight fiscal situations? Those questions remain unanswered.

The fact that the minister cannot provide these basic details creates a broader credibility issue for the government. How are Canadians supposed to trust a government that cannot provide cost estimates for its own legislation? Does the minister really know the cost or is the government purposely withholding this information because it knows Canadians will overwhelmingly reject its approach if the real figures were made public? Canadians have a right to know the real costs of this legislation.

What I see in Bill C-10 is an accumulation of ineffective policies to solve a diminishing problem, all at an unknown cost to the taxpayer. What I do not see is how the bill would actually lower crime and recidivism rates and ultimately make Canada's streets and communities any safer.

• (1805)

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, is the member opposite aware that the proposed legislation would allow the courts, including drug treatment courts, to exempt an offender from the mandatory minimum sentence that would otherwise be imposed where the offence involved no other aggravating factors other than a previous conviction for a serious drug offence and the offender's successfully completes a treatment program? This seems contrary to what the member has suggested.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question, but I think she was reading from her device.

The Conservatives are putting forward legislation which is bundled to ensure that they can—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I am trying to answer the question, but it seems that another member is trying to ask a question.

We are seeing the Conservative agenda coming forward which does nothing to help individuals who have mental health issues or drug and substance abuse issues. We are hearing that from organizations such as the John Howard Society of Canada, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and victims' associations. They would like to see policy put in place to ensure that criminals do not reoffend. What we are seeing from the government is an agenda based on ideology.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, someone who visited my constituency office to emphasize how important crime and safety is provided me with a copy of an article from the *Winnipeg Free Press* dated September 14, 2011. The very first line reads, "Family and friends of a slain 15-year-old gathered Tuesday evening at the spot where the boy was stabbed, while investigators continued to work to find his killer."

I believe the constituents of Winnipeg North share the same concerns in regard to crime and safety and they want our streets to be safer.

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Would the member agree that what we really need to do is to start investing in things such as community policing and after school programs? Looking at those programs and finding things for our young people to do as an alternative to participating in gangs, for example, is where the government needs to put more resources and more of its energy.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more. We have seen the priorities flipped. We are spending money to build megaprisons, to double-bunk prisoners. We are looking at all the wrong things. We need to ensure that our youth and individuals with mental health or drug abuse issues or whatever their issues are provided the necessary supports so they do not commit crimes. When unfortunately they do commit crimes, we have to ensure that the necessary resources for their rehabilitation are in place when they serve their time.

The government is completely ignoring the point of rehabilitation. We should provide the necessary resources for more of the programs that my hon. colleague was talking about to help those individuals who go into the prison system.

• (1810)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives denied unanimous consent to move the child provisions of the bill. This is something that was done before when dealing with Karla Homolka as well as the Hell's Angels. I would like to hear the member's comments on that. We could have cracked down on this right away, but the Conservatives are refusing to do that. Once again they are protecting those who would abuse children.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, it could have easily been done. Our justice critic, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, mentioned that we are spending four minutes per page to have a discussion on this omnibus bill. We still need to have more discussion on the bill, but everyone in the House has the same mandate in that we want to protect children. The Conservatives could have easily agreed to this. There is a precedent. We could have moved this forward. We could have stepped forward to protect our children as quickly as possible.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like unanimous consent to move the following motion, "That the provisions of Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts, respecting drug treatment court programs, and consisting of clause 43(2), do compose Bill C-10B; that the remaining provisions in Bill C-10 do compose Bill C-10A; that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary; that Bill C-10A and Bill C-10B be reprinted; and that Bill C-10B be deemed to have been read the first time and be printed, deemed read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment and deemed read the third time and passed".

The purpose of this would be to ensure that we could delay sentencing where someone is in a drug treatment program and it

would remove the mandatory minimum if the person successfully completed the program.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Yukon.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

I want to start by talking about what the name of this bill actually means to Canadians. For a long time Canadians have watched the criminal justice system work in a way that was not making the safety and security of our streets a community priority. After all, if it had been a priority, how could previous governments stand by while dangerous criminals were released from prison after serving a third or even a sixth of their sentences?

In addition to all of this, Canadian victims, having already suffered so much, were not being listened to or included in the correction process of their offenders. This was not only worsening the feeling of victimization, but was also extremely insulting.

These are just some of the reasons that our government is so serious about delivering the right kind of changes that are found in the Safe Streets and Communities Act. It is important for the safety of law-abiding Canadian families. It is important for victims. It is important because we need to have a justice system in this country in which Canadian families can have confidence.

Since first taking office, we have worked to restore confidence in Canada's justice system and to fulfill our commitment to put law-abiding Canadians and victims first. We have taken direct action to fulfill that commitment through this legislation and by giving our law enforcement agencies the resources and tools they need to do their jobs effectively.

We have also moved forward in many areas to crack down on crime and to ensure that our neighbourhoods and communities are safe and secure.

Canadians have told us that they want a justice system that actually delivers justice and that protects our citizens without compromising the values that define our country. Again, I believe the legislation in front of us today does exactly that. It is yet another step forward in our commitment to keep Canadians safe.

There are a number of measures contained in Bill C-10, some of which my hon. colleagues have spoken about quite eloquently today.

Bill C-10 will help us build safer streets and communities by, for example, establishing new mandatory minimum penalties for certain existing offences related to child exploitation and increasing the maximum sentence to better reflect the reprehensible nature of these crimes.

The legislation before us today will also provide mandatory minimum penalties for serious drug offences when such offences are carried out for organized crime purposes or if they involve targeting our children.

One case where we repeatedly see this is with the targeting of areas around schools by drug dealers. I think all of us can agree there are few things worse than specifically targeting our children for criminal purposes. Deliberately trying to get kids hooked on drugs for financial gain is deplorable, which is why I am pleased to support the measures in Bill C-10 that provide mandatory minimum sentences for those who engage in this sort of illegal activity.

The Safe Streets and Communities Act also delivers real penalties for serious and repeat violent young offenders. Bill C-10 proposes amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act that would highlight the protection of society as a fundamental principle for the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

It will simplify pretrial detention rules to help ensure that, when necessary, violent and repeat young offenders are kept off the streets while awaiting trial. It will strengthen sentencing provisions and will reduce barriers to custody, where appropriate, for violent and repeat young offenders.

In terms of increasing offender accountability, Bill C-10 proposes very important reforms to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to modernize discipline in prisons, and to add a requirement in law that each offender completes his or her own correctional plan. This would include things such as behavioural expectations and the meeting of court-ordered obligations, such as child support and victim restitution.

Bill C-10, among other things, will also enshrine victim participation in parole board hearings and will keep victims better informed about the behaviour and handling of offenders.

As well, the Safe Streets and Communities Act proposes amendments to the Criminal Records Act that would make certain people ineligible to apply for criminal record suspension, including those convicted of sexual offences against children, or those convicted of more than three offences. I want to address this point, specifically.

● (1815)

With this provision we are saying there are some people who should never be eligible for a criminal record suspension. As I said earlier, targeting our children is one of the most despicable forms of crime, and sexual abuse of a child is among the most heinous.

By including these provisions in the Safe Streets and Communities Act, we are taking action to ensure that those who have committed this terrible crime will never be able to hide from the harm they have caused to the most vulnerable in our society, our children. We believe this is an appropriate form and fair measure in face of such despicable crimes.

New mandatory minimum penalties are provided for seven existing offences related to child sexual exploitation and abuse for children under 16 years of age, such as sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, incest, and luring a child through the use of a computer.

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The addition of mandatory minimum penalties to these offences will also have the effect of eliminating the use of conditional sentences or house arrest for these crimes.

As a father I am concerned about predators who hunt our children online and prey on their innocence.

As a police officer, I have looked into the eyes of too many victims, trying to provide comfort, unsure if they would find the justice and protection that they both needed and deserved.

As a corrections manager, I have been part of the rehabilitative process, the programming, hope, help and healing that can come from these institutions, as well as the human potential that lies within.

As an investigator for the safer community and neighbourhoods unit in my riding, I saw the degradation of neighbourhoods and the citizens' sense of safety and pride. I heard the loud and resounding voices of our communities to take action. I witnessed first-hand the revitalization of full neighbourhoods, community spirit and pride, and the citizens' sense of safety and security.

I also watched Habitat for Humanity homes take the place of drug dens. I watched the long but successful struggles of those battling with addictions finally rise above them.

It was through action, bold and tough decisions, that the first, not the last, step to a better life for all occurred.

Our government has the courage and the resolve to learn from our past, improve our present and perfect our future.

In closing, I hope that my hon. colleagues on this side of the House will also demonstrate the courage and resolve needed to keep Canadian families safer, stand up for victims and hold criminals accountable by supporting this bill.

● (1820)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his introduction, the member referred to a justice system in which we can have confidence. Just to improve my knowledge and enlighten me, I wonder if he could tell us of any organizations working within the Canadian justice system that would be willing to support Bill C-10 in its entirety and in which he has confidence.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Madam Speaker, we heard loud and clear from victims across Canada during the election campaign in the spring that Canadians' priorities were to support victims and hold criminals accountable. That is what this legislation will do. Victims' organizations across this country have spoken loud and clear that all too often their voices are not heard in the justice system from the moment they become victimized. They are forgotten from that point forward. This legislation will ensure that the victims are heard from the beginning to the end of the process, that the people who need our help the most will get it, and that the offenders, who made the choice to victimize people, are held accountable for that, and that victims are supported in this country.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked a great deal about individuals who exploit our children. I agree in terms of just how serious a crime that is.

However, if we look at the legislation and follow it through, it is saying that if a pedophile forces a child to watch pornographic movies, as an example, there is a minimum sentence that is established. There is also a minimum sentence established for someone who is growing five or six marijuana plants in his or her basement. The minimum sentence is actually greater for the person growing the pot than it is for the person who is victimizing a child.

Would the member not say there is something wrong with that picture?

Mr. Ryan Leef: Madam Speaker, I think what the member is referring to is when the prosecution decides to go by way of summary conviction and not an indictable offence. It is comparing apples and oranges when we start comparing pot growers to people who are exploiting our children.

However, if we want to talk about the offence of growing five or six marijuana plants, the hon. member is making that seem as though, in this case, the offender innocently stumbled upon them.

There are aggravating circumstances outlined in the legislation that talk about when those minimum standards will kick in, and I will just note a couple of those. The aggravating factors include: for the benefit of organized crime; involving use or threat of violence; involving use or threat of weapons, by someone who has previously been convicted in the past 10 years of a serious drug offence; when they do it in prison; if they are in a position of authority and they abuse that. That is just to name a few.

This is a case where it is not just a hippy surfer growing a couple of pot plants in his basement. This is somebody who is making a criminal organization out of this.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, Yukon is finally getting good representation in the House. As chair of the public safety and national security committee, the hon. member is a very good contributor to our committee. He spoke about pardons and record suspension, and some of those issues. Can he tell this House why those who are convicted of a sexual offence in relation to a minor should not be able to receive a pardon?

• (1825)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Madam Speaker, it is critical. Canadians have spoken loud and clear about this. We cannot allow somebody who has done that to our youth, to our children, victimized anybody in a sexual manner, to be pardoned for that. That is not what Canadians want. That is not what Canadians said to us during the campaign. They gave us a strong mandate to ensure that does not occur. Those offenders cannot have the opportunity to run and hide from that, and there is no clear indication from any science in those types of crimes that they will recover and not repeat those offences.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is with a great deal of sadness that I rise today to speak against this omnibus legislation. I agree with the previous speaker that it is more like an ominous bill rather than an omnibus one.

The first area that makes me sad is that my colleagues across the floor did not agree to separate the bill and let go through a fast-track process the provisions that deal with the abuse of young children. Being a teacher, a mother and now a grandmother to three of the most beautiful grandchildren in the world, there is nothing that is more important than the protection of our children from sexual predators. It is an absolute shame that my colleagues have not agreed to fast-track that.

To put nine pieces of legislation into one bill, and then to keep hearing the rhetoric about how, because I happen to sit on this side of the House, I do not care about victims is offensive.

I have been a teacher and a counsellor most of my life. I have dealt with victims of child abuse and rape. I have dealt with families that have lost loved ones who were shot through gang violence. I have dealt with families who have dealt with violent crime. I know what it is like to be a victim. I know the kind of pain victims suffer.

I want to remind my colleagues across the floor that absolutely 39% of Canadians voted for them, but that leaves a high majority who did not give them a mandate to bring in sweeping legislation.

I am also hearing what they are hearing from victims everywhere they go.

I was back in my community of Newton-North Delta last weekend. For those who know Surrey, they know how it is often in the news as having the greatest number of gang-style killings and violence. Recently, a young woman was butchered at her workplace. She was not even safe at work. We dealt with the aftermath of that not only with her family, but with the whole community. We lost a young man who was shot. We dealt not only with the family but with the whole community.

As a community, we have dealt with the impact of these kinds of killings and these kinds of crimes. Our community deals with young people who are engaged in drug abuse and drug addiction. I do not have members in my community telling us to punish those who do the crimes. It actually made me cry just a few weeks ago to hear a mother who lost her child due to violent crime saying that all she wanted was justice. She did not want draconian punishment because she herself was a mother.

Last weekend I attended a forum held by the Surrey Board of Trade, and I learned something really amazing that I had not expected to learn at that meeting. The president of the Surrey Board of Trade said education is the single indicator toward building our economy, to making our communities safe, to making savings on health care, to protecting the environment, whichever aspect of our society that we value. That president did not say it is incarceration and punishment, and there is a huge difference between education and punishment.

Government Orders

● (1830)

As a counsellor and teacher, let me say that punishment by itself and the kind of punitive sentences, mandatory sentences, and actions we are seeing explicit in this bill will make very little difference to crime. The U.S. just to the south of us has tried incarceration and has tried the death penalty. It still has high drug abuse, high death rates due to the use of weapons, and a very high population in prison.

I know we think we can do things differently. If our business community, the president of the Surrey Board of Trade, can see education as a main driving force to building healthy, safe communities, then surely we as parliamentarians should be taking the time to debate those issues.

I have to express my dismay at this time that as an elected official I am being denied, and therefore, the people who voted for me and sent me here to represent them, a fair and in-depth debate of issues that are going to impact our families, our communities, our young people, and those who are the most vulnerable.

It is time that we stopped using the rhetoric of the victim to say we do not care or that the NDP members do not care. It is time we started to talk about what really works. I will tell the House what works, from my perspective of 30 years of experience in the school system and in my community.

What works is prevention programs. What works is better policing. What works is rehabilitation. There is not a doctor out there who is going to call drug abuse and drug addiction just something fancy that somebody gets up and does one morning. It has now been classified as a medical condition. So what do we do with people who have a medical condition? Do we put them in prisons or do we treat them? Canadians who are compassionate citizens want to see treatment.

In Surrey, the fastest-growing district in B.C., we have more students sitting in mouldy classrooms because our province keeps telling us it cannot afford to build schools. Yet, this legislation would force provinces to build prisons. Does that mean that young people in my area would have to sit even longer in mouldy classrooms day in and day out because the province would be forced to build prisons?

I also want to say to my colleagues that there are two ways to debate. I really like respectful debate. Yes, teachers deserve a decent wage. They absolutely do and they deserve it for the job they do everyday. However, let me get back to this. Are we as Canadians saying that we would rather put people in prisons rather than take steps to address the very issues and problems that lead people into crime, whether it be addiction, poverty or just family dysfunction, so therefore the need for some social programs?

I urge my colleagues across the floor to reconsider separating the child sexual exploitation bill. Let us work that one through and then send it to committee, and let us take a serious look, based on research and on good practice.

● (1835)

Those members can accuse the NDP of being out there, but the Canadian Bar Association has spoken and said that this is the wrong direction.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech, at least the last part, and I think her proposal fits in with what all members want, namely, to split up the bill. In any omnibus bill, there are always some good parts and some more debatable parts. I do not understand why the government insists on introducing omnibus bills that bury good proposals under bad ones. If the government were to split up the bill, there would be unanimous consent on several parts and we could at least improve the debatable parts.

The hon. member talked about prevention. I am referring to young offenders, to Quebec's Youth Criminal Justice Act, which is cited as an example around the world and whereby prevention is effective with 85% of young people. I think we could learn something from that.

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the information he shared with us. My experience as a councillor and teacher has taught me that when one is dealing with young offenders, prevention, rehabilitation and finding support for them goes a long way. All kinds of evidence show that when young people are incarcerated in prison, they come out on the other side as a more hardened criminals and lose the little fear they had when they went in.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have listened to my colleague across the floor talk about having been a teacher. Some of us on this side have been police officers for a long time. We certainly have dealt with the issues of which she speaks and we certainly have dealt with victims.

I listened as she blamed society for most of the ills of those people who had committed crimes. Quite frankly, I have not found many people in my life who blame society. It is generally the individual at whom they look. We have done a lot of things to help young people, but sometimes they have to help themselves.

I heard her complaining about people going to jail. Could she tell me who it is that goes to jail? It has been my experience that the people who go to jail are the people who committed crimes. Does she know somebody else?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Madam Speaker, I have spent some of time not only teaching in a regular school, but also working with juveniles who have been incarcerated in prison. My experience is that the people who have ended up in jail have committed crimes. I am not saying they were innocent when they went in there, but it is how we deal with people and at what level we deal with them. This legislation enforces mandatory sentencing. That is just plain wrong.

I would add one other point. I did not blame society for all the ills of whatever anybody has done. Absolutely, human beings make choices. However, we as a society cannot escape the fact that there are certain conditions, whether they be medical conditions that one is born with or societal issues, that lead to greater levels of crime.

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Try working in an inner city school and see the pressures on the young kids. Try dealing with a young man who, at the age of 14 in order for his mother to make a living, has to go out in the evening to find customers for his mother who is a prostitute. They are living on the run and they cannot afford to stay in one place more than one night. Those kinds of conditions are created by communities.

● (1840)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have sat in the House today and enjoyed the speeches from all sides. Certainly it is a topic that gives the full sense of the word debate because there is a difference of opinion here, and I can appreciate that.

It is my pleasure to rise and add my comments to the debate on Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act. As other speakers before me have, I would like to break it down. It is an omnibus bill. We have heard that. It is nine different bills that have been moved together into this one that will help make our streets and our communities safer. I would also like to focus on the legislation that proposes to strengthen the sentences for those who commit sexual offences against children. I am pleased to hear that those from the other side of the House would like to see this brought forward as well.

Bill C-10 proposes to add mandatory minimum penalties to seven offences that do not currently impose mandatory minimum penalties, including incest, under section 155, Internet luring a child, section 172.1 and section 271, and sexual assault where the victim is under the age of 16 years. It also proposes higher mandatory minimum penalties for nine existing child specific sexual offences, including sexual interference, section 151, sexual exploitation and making and distributing as well as possessing child pornography.

As well, in building on what was originally proposed in the former Bill C-54, Bill C-10 proposes to increase the maximum penalty for four child sex offences with a corresponding increase in their mandatory minimum sentences to better reflect the particularly heinous nature of those offences.

First is bestiality involving a child, section 160, when proceeded on summary conviction, it increases the maximum penalty from six months to two years less a day and imposes a mandatory minimum of six months imprisonment. Former Bill C-54 had proposed a mandatory minimum penalty of 30 days.

The second one is making and distributing child pornography, section 163.1(2) and (3). When proceeded on summary conviction, it increases the maximum penalty from 18 months to two years less a day and increases the current mandatory minimum penalty from 90 days to 6 months.

Also, the other offence is the indictable offence of a parent or a guardian procuring sexual activity, section 170, increasing the minimum penalty from 6 months to 1 year and the maximum penalty from 5 to 10 years when the victim is under the age of 16 and from 45 days to 6 months and 2 years to 5 years respectively when the victim is between the ages of 16 and 17 years.

As I said earlier, Bill C-10 also seeks to criminalize preparatory conduct; that is, to criminalize conduct that child sex offenders engage in to facilitate their ultimate objective of actually sexually assaulting a child. It does so by proposing to enact two new offences.

The first new offence would prohibit anyone from providing sexually explicit material to a young person for the purpose of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence against that young person. Many sex offenders do this with a view to grooming their victims, for example, to lower their victim's sexual inhibitions with a view to making it easier to sexually exploit them a little later on. Currently, this conduct is only criminalized if the offender provides the child with material that constitutes child pornography.

Bill C-10 defines "sexually explicit material" as a representation that shows either a person engaged in explicit sexual activity or that shows the person's genital organs and does it in a way to lessen the child's resolve to fight against it. Although this is a new definition and a new offence, the definition incorporates terminology that is already used in the child pornography offence. Section 163.1 includes both aspects of this definition and the voyeurism offence incorporates both aspects of the definition.

● (1845)

The proposed new offence would also impose a mandatory minimum penalty consistent with those proposed elsewhere in the bill.

The second offence proposed by Bill C-10 will prohibit anyone from using telecommunications to agree or make arrangements with another person to commit a sexual offence against a child. It is modelled on the existing "luring a child" offence in section 172.1 of the Criminal Code, which prohibits using a computer system to communicate directly with a child for the purpose of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence against that child.

However, as the luring offence only applies if the communication is with the specific child victim, this new offence closes the gap where the communication is between two other persons to facilitate the commission of a sexual offence against the child, in effect, where perhaps two adults come together on purpose to victimize a young child. This new offence would also impose a mandatory minimum penalty consistent with those proposed elsewhere in the bill.

These two new offences would also be added to schedule 1 of the Criminal Records Act to ensure that persons convicted of these new offences would be ineligible to apply for a record suspension or pardon, as it is currently called, for the same period of time as for the other child sex offences.

Last, Bill C-10 proposes reforms to prevent child sex offenders from engaging in conduct or practices that can facilitate their sexual offending.

Currently a court can impose a condition on convicted child sex offenders, a prohibition order under section 161, or on suspected child sex offenders, a recognizance or peace bond under section 810.1, prohibiting them from engaging in specified conduct that would facilitate their commission of one of the enumerated child sex offences or even the abduction offences.

For example, these conditions can prohibit an offender from attending places that are normally frequented by children. The example that has been given many times is the offender who shows up on school grounds or shows up on a playground.

Also, an offender can be prohibited from obtaining a paid or volunteer position involving a position of trust or authority over children. That might be as a provider of day care or as a provider of education, some of those different examples.

Bill C-10 proposes to expand the list of offences for which these conditions may be imposed to include the four child procuring prostitution offences in section 212: subsection 212(1), procuring; 212(2), living on the avails of prostitution of a person under the age of 18; aggravated offence in relation to living on the avails of prostitution of a person under the age of 18 years; and subsection 212(4), prostitution of a person under the age of 18.

Bill C-10 also proposes to require the court to consider imposing two new conditions: prohibiting the offender from having any unsupervised access to a young person; and prohibiting the offender from having any unsupervised use of the Internet.

These types of conditions, to put it plainly, just make sense. If we prevent the offender from having the opportunity or the tools to commit a child sex offence, then we prevent new children from becoming victims.

I would also note that these preventive measures would be added to the existing provisions in sections 161 and 810.1, with the result that they will be subject to the same checks and balances that currently exist for these provisions, such as, for example, enabling the offender or the Crown to apply to vary the conditions where a court is satisfied that it is desirable due to a change in circumstances.

I have heard a little today that we are pushing the bill through. There have been over 200 speeches given on different sections of the bill in the previous Parliament and even the speeches today. I would urge the opposition to jump on board to support these measures that would help keep our community safe and our streets.

• (1850)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, like many of his colleagues, the hon. member who just spoke focused on pedophilia almost exclusively. I would like to say that if we are talking about distributing pornography to minors, I agree we need to be very strict on that. If we are talking about imposing harsher sentences for sexual abuse of minors, I support that too. I have three children. You have mixed up this aspect of the law, which is extremely important to any father, with other things that do not have to do with the same kind of crime. In addition, you refuse to split up the bill.

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The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I ask all members to address their comments to the Chair.

Mr. François Lapointe: How can you justify refusing to split up this bill to make it possible for a father to vote in favour of this without having to vote against other principles?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member is the father of three children and that he cares about these types of bills.

It is a methodology of opposition members to find that one little area that they support and say that we should just separate that one.

This bill was brought forward. I can guarantee that we will move forward on this quickly. All the nine bills that are in Bill C-10 are bills that we campaigned on. They are bills that the voters across this country recognized our party as standing strong for.

I would encourage members to support the entire bill, a good bill that would make our streets and communities safer.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the member.

I have a letter here that was written to the Prime Minister by Jane Wright in Providence Bay. She states:

There are adequate measures presently in place to keep in prison the few who are truly dangerous. Your crime bill will further disadvantage young aboriginals and the mentally ill....

Does the member think that we should be stocking our prisons with aboriginals and the mentally ill as opposed to providing rehabilitative and proper services for them?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I think our prisons should be full of those who have committed crimes against our society and who have been found guilty in a court of law. I think our prisons should be a place where we can try to rehabilitate people, but we should hold them, incarcerate them and tell them that the penalty for crime is prison in some cases.

The mandatory minimums that we are bringing forward, generally speaking, are on indictable offences where the Canadian public has said that they do not want them doing house arrest and that they do not believe those people should be living out their time in their homes while their victims are sometimes completely victimized.

We realize that there is a high percentage of aboriginals in our penitentiaries, and, yes, that must be addressed as well, but in many case there are many aboriginal victims who are standing right there while the offender is the locked in prison.

• (1855)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member spoke on one aspect of Bill C-10. Other members will take another aspect of Bill C-10.

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The point is that the government has taken a bunch of bills that should have been, in essence, separate bills and tied them into an omnibus bill.

The member made reference to the fact that this was an election issue. The government could probably take 30 or 40 election issues and say that now that it has a majority, that it has the most seats, it wants all of those bills to be included in an omnibus bill.

The concern, in part, that we have is—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to give the hon. member for Crowfoot the opportunity to respond. He has 30 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, 10 or 11 years ago when I was elected, I was actually surprised. During the election campaign, the Liberals would talk about law and order but then, as soon as soon as they were elected, we would never see any law and order bills coming forward in this House.

I would tell the fairly new member over there that there have been over 200 speeches made in this place in debate dealing with different aspects of this bill. The Liberals tried to stall it here in the House. They tried to stall in the committees. They tried to stall it in the Senate.

Now the member is saying that if they are given a little more time for debate—

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup has the floor, but I will have to interrupt him.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, what we have here is a huge mistake that could potentially cost the Canadian treasury \$5 billion. The repressive measures that were taken throughout the United States did not help lower the crime rate. In some cases, there was even an increase in serious crimes. The government wants to invest \$5 billion of public funds in a solution that will worsen the problem. And that does not include the hundreds of millions of dollars that the provinces will have to spend to expand prisons and meet the demand that will be created, for no good reason, by the current government.

The current government is boasting that it has a majority, but it is forgetting to keep in mind that approximately six out of ten Canadians did not vote for extreme right-wing values, such as being tough on crime. So the government wants to drop \$5 billion without even having a clear majority that agrees with the basic principle.

I want to come back to the so-called contempt for victims the bleeding hearts on the left here have, according to our Conservative friends across the way. There is a dynamic that escapes me. They are applying tough on crime policies, but there is ample evidence over a number of decades from a number of places in North America that such policies do not reduce crime. It does not work. There may even be an increase. I want to know how increasing the number of victims is a form of respect for victims.

Can we tell the woman who, statistically speaking, will be abused—and would not have been with a policy that reduced the crime rate

—that she can take comfort in the fact that the person who abused her will spend an extra six months in prison thanks to the bill the Conservative government passed two years beforehand? Is that how we show respect for victims, by creating the necessary conditions to produce more victims in the coming decades?

We are entering a spiral of crime. This reminds me of *A Clockwork Orange*, a movie that was extremely popular a very long time ago, in which—

● (1900)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I have to interrupt the hon. member. He can continue his comments when we resume this debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be following up on a question that I raised in the House about the Keystone XL pipeline. First I would like to say that the Keystone pipeline is part of a massive plan to renew North America's oil and gas infrastructure. It will allow for a drastic expansion of oil sands production.

Under this plan, oil from the oil sands would be destined for export markets. Crude oil would be sent to the United States, where it would be refined. The refined oil would then be shipped back to us. That is illogical. This is not a viable energy security plan. The Keystone XL pipeline project is the third phase of a \$13 billion project to export western Canada's bitumen to American refineries.

It is estimated that 900,000 barrels of raw bitumen will be exported to the United States each day. An estimated 40,500 potential direct and indirect jobs will be lost because of this government's negligence. The president of the Alberta Federation of Labour believes that the Keystone XL pipeline project will kill far more jobs than it will create.

The pipeline projects to the United States have already slowed down new bitumen upgrading projects in Canada. According to a study by the Alberta Federation of Labour, nine bitumen upgrading projects have been postponed or delayed. While the Americans will benefit from well-paying refinery jobs, all Canadians will get is the environmental costs of oil sands development. In addition to taking potential upgrading and refining jobs away from Canadians, the pipeline project will also destroy the environment.

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Just last year, the Transportation Safety Board recorded over 100 leaks in Canadian pipelines, including 23 leaks in the first section of the Keystone project. In addition, the rights of aboriginal people have been violated because they were not properly consulted. Last week, during question period, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources said, and I quote: "...the Keystone XL pipeline will provide a substantial economic benefit to both Canada and the United States."

However, since this project is being developed at the expense of workers, our environment, future generations and the rights of aboriginal people, how can the parliamentary secretary claim that the Keystone project will provide significant benefits to Canada?

The government did not give us all the facts and is unable to justify the so-called benefits of the Keystone pipeline. This project does not make any sense in terms of energy security, the environment or the economy. I would like to know why the government chose a quick profit and why it is protecting the interests of the large oil companies rather than developing a viable energy strategy that is consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, our government is doing what Canadians asked us to do on May 2, and that is to concentrate on what matters to them, which are jobs and economic growth.

The oil sands is a proven strategic resource for Canada. It is creating jobs and economic opportunity for Canadians in all provinces and regions across this country. As I did a couple of times yesterday, I want to go over how many jobs are being created because the NDP is not being straightforward on this issue. Right now, the oil sands is responsible for 130,000 direct jobs for Canadians. We know as well that it currently contributes to 390,000 jobs across Canada, direct and induced jobs, and over the next 25 years the oil sands development is anticipated to support an estimated 480,000 jobs across Canada.

I want to talk about the Keystone pipeline. If the Keystone XL pipeline is approved, because of the additional oil sands product that it will carry, it is estimated that over 600,000 good jobs for Canadians will be created. The NDP is saying no to 600,000 jobs for Canadians. It can hardly pretend that it is interested in Canadians and in the job situation.

That does not come as a surprise. The NDP's former environment critic called for a moratorium on oil sands development that would kill thousands of Canadian jobs and destroy the progress our government has made in terms of Canada's economic recovery. The Keystone XL pipeline project will contribute to both job creation and energy security for Canada.

Unlike the NDP, which is clearly only too happy to sacrifice good Canadian jobs and jeopardize Canada's economic recovery for its own political game and gain, our government will continue to promote Canada and the oil sands as a stable and secure, and ethical source of energy for the world. We will not apologize for standing up for Canada.

• (1905)

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, the government seems incapable of understanding that economic development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, sustainable development is the way of the future. We believe that instead of approving a pipeline that will destroy everything in its path, cost us 40,500 jobs, and considerably increase our greenhouse gas emissions, the government should stop this project.

The NDP is proposing a transition plan for a green economy, which will create good jobs and ensure our energy security. Until then, the burden of proof rests with the government. It must prove that the massive export of crude oil is a good thing for Canada. We just do not believe it.

[English]

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, if the NDP has such a plan, Canadians have certainly never heard of it.

We do believe that we can balance economic development and environmental protection. We are focused, as I said, on what matters to Canadians, which is job growth and economic growth as well.

We know the resource sector is key to Canada's economic growth. As I said, it employs hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country.

We also know the importance of getting the environmental challenges right. That is why we have invested in new technology that will create both jobs and a cleaner environment. That is why we are working with the provinces to ensure that our resources are developed in a responsible manner.

I just heard the member, in her hyperbole, say that this pipeline was going to destroy everything in its passage. That is a ridiculous thing to say. That is why the NDP should stop listening to the extremist environmentalists who want to shut down the development of the oil sands and destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs.

We are not going to let that happen. We are going to work with Canadians.

POVERTY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a question that I raised in June with regard to the number of children living in poverty in Canada. I was quoting numbers of over 100,000 children in British Columbia, but I want to put this into a national context.

In an article in *The Vancouver Sun* on September 26, Paul Kershaw indicated a number of grim statistics. He says:

Canada allocates just 0.34 per cent of GDP to child care and kindergarten services for children under age six (2008). This is just over half of the United Kingdom and New Zealand; and barely one-third of what is allocated in France, Sweden and Denmark.

He also said:

Canada ranks among the industrialized countries with the highest rates of child poverty. Child poverty in Canada is three to five times higher than the countries that make it a real priority to eliminate poverty among the generation raising young kids.

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He concludes by saying:

On the other hand, history books make clear Canadians have been reticent to build new social policy since the 1970s.

This reticence is especially evident in our slow national response to the fact that the generation raising young kids today is the first in a long time to struggle with a dramatically lower standard of living than their parents.

That highlights the fact that when we are talking about child poverty, we are talking about children and families.

I want to give a perspective on both coasts. In New Brunswick on September 27, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released some numbers that we often hear about the economy. It released numbers saying that the cost of poverty for the Province of New Brunswick is \$2 billion.

These calculations are based on research that consistently links poverty to poorer health prospects, lower literacy, more crime, poor school performance for children and greater stress for everyone living in poverty. There is not only a cost to the family, but there is a cost to the community, the province and the country in not dealing with poverty.

In British Columbia, B.C. Campaign 2000 released the 2010 child poverty report card, and it had some very grim statistics. In fact, it said that the 2008 figure before tax followed six consecutive years when British Columbia had the worst child poverty record of any province in Canada. Campaign 2000 equated it to about 121,000 children, which is more than the total populations of Campbell River, Mission, Squamish and Vernon combined. We have more children living in poverty in British Columbia than the combination of a number of cities in our province.

The report goes on to say that it is worse for children under the age of six, who had a poverty rate of 19.6% in 2008. Almost 20% of British Columbia children under the age of six are living in poverty.

The 2010 child poverty report card also reminds us that Canada signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and that the House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000, yet the report goes on to say that one of every seven children in B.C. still lives in poverty despite years of unprecedented economic prosperity.

In B.C. up to 2008, we have allowed income inequality to increase.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, we have higher than average welfare rates in general, and although some progress has been made, the report says that the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District still ranks among the highest in the province in terms of poverty-stricken students. In case we think we are just talking about numbers, it goes on to say that these children are doing without food. When kids leave on Friday, they come back on Monday and have barely eaten all weekend.

When will the government give us a concrete plan on lifting children and families out of poverty?

● (1910)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of

Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan has given me this opportunity to explain the progress our government has made.

While Canada is emerging from one of the most fragile economic times we have seen since the Great Depression, Canada's economic recovery is leading the G7 countries.

The targeted measures in the first phase of our economic action plan have contributed to creating the favourable conditions for this recovery, but that is not to say that the economic problems other countries are facing will not have repercussions on our own country.

[Translation]

The recovery remains fragile.

[English]

The best protection against poverty is a strong economy and a strong labour market. That is why jobs and the economy will continue to be our first priority. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Canada has created 600,000 net new jobs since the height of the economic downturn and 300,000 jobs are protected through work-sharing agreements.

Despite the opinion expressed by my hon. colleague, no one here is unaware of the reality of poverty. Compassion has nothing to do with political allegiances. We all want the best for our fellow Canadians.

We are investing in programs to promote growth and job creation, programs like the one time hiring credit for small businesses and programs for Canadian workers who have been laid off, like the targeted initiative for older workers, which has helped close to 16,000 people in the most vulnerable communities.

We are investing in programs for Canadian families. We provide over \$14 billion per year in benefits to families with children.

Our government is investing in programs for our seniors who have worked hard to build our country. Budget 2011 increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors with little or no income. This will be a benefit for more than 680,000 seniors.

We are investing in programs for caregivers. We estimated that more than 500,000 caregivers will benefit from the family caregiver tax credit.

We are investing in programs for the working poor. We have provided over \$1 billion per year in the working income tax benefit, which helps to ensure low income families are finally better off when they have a job.

We are investing in programs that promote education and skills training because that is the key to economic independence and prosperity for everyone.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have also invested in apprenticeships and the trades. As of today, we have issued more than 280,000 apprenticeship grants for college and university students through the Canada student loans and grants program and the adults for low literacy who want to acquire the essential skills they need to improve their future prospects.

I want to stress that the risks to our financial stability are too great for us to maintain the status quo. We are looking for ways to harmonize these investments with a balanced budget, without imposing a tax hike on hard-working Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind the hon. member that members must not mention the name of sitting members of the House.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

● (1915)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, despite the list of programs that the member cites, the reality is that thousands of children and their families are still living in poverty in this country.

The 2010 child poverty report card stated that child poverty was known to be economically and socially unsustainable and that we either shared the collective responsibility to prevent and eliminate child and family poverty or we would face the rising costs in health care services, criminal justice and education, along with lost productivity and human potential.

The government continues to talk about jobs. What we are talking about is the loss of future workers because they simply are living in poverty and do not have access to education and other services that they need.

In June, I tabled Bill C-233, an act to eliminate poverty in Canada. The bill was the result of consultations with a wide variety of anti-

poverty activists, community members and government officials. I would ask the member if she and her government are prepared to support Bill C-233, an act to eliminate poverty in Canada?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, Canadians gave us a clear, strong mandate. They want us to respect the money they make and the money we receive in taxes, and they want us to spend it very wisely.

The best way to fight poverty is to get Canadians working. Our government is doing just that. We have created 600,000 new jobs since July 2009.

Our government is reaching out to help families across the country, especially those in need. That is one of the reasons that we introduced the universal child care benefit and we increased the national child benefit.

Those are all initiatives aimed to help low income families get over the welfare wall, just like the WITB that we introduced and then increased.

Every action we have taken has been to help Canadians and their families become independent and help them contribute to their economy and their community.

Sadly, the NDP voted against every one of those initiatives to help vulnerable families.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:17 p.m.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
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House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 28, 2011



Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SCOTT KNOWLES

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour the life of a wonderful young man, Scott Knowles, who just recently lost his life in a very tragic accident.

Scott was a well-loved and respected man in the community of Miramichi. As a youth, he played sports and excelled at school, while at the same time dealing with a severe case of Crohn's disease. At one time he was forced to undergo four surgeries in nine days. While these type of odds would have stopped others, Scott persevered through it all. He then went on to follow in his dad's footsteps and became a pharmacist. Miramichiers were delighted to have him return to our community and work with his dad, Stan, in managing their businesses. He was a caring and excellent pharmacist. In his private life, he was always an active community member, a treasured friend and a devoted son.

Today our community mourns the loss of a great role model for our children and a leading man in our community. Stan, Jean, Tara and family and friends are in my thoughts and prayers.

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will rise later today to table a bill that seeks to amend the Canada Labour Code.

As we all know, illness or injury can strike anyone at any time. This year alone, hundreds of thousands of hard-working Canadians will be struck with catastrophic illness or serious physical injuries that prevent them from making a contribution in the workplace and providing for them and their family.

They will need time off, in some cases a lot of time off, to recover, but today they have just 12 weeks to recover before they must be back on the clock or they risk losing their jobs. For many, this will not be enough time and the suffering will intensify.

The amendment proposed in the bill will extend the eligible period from 12 weeks to 52 weeks during which a worker suffering from a serious injury or illness is able to return to their job without fear of losing their position.

If passed or adopted by the government, the bill will ensure that Canadians suffering from serious injury or illness have some peace of mind during their recovery period and will increase the likelihood that they will be able to rejoin the workforce in the same capacity and in the position that they held before they were forced to leave.

This is fair and right and I hope my colleagues would agree and support the legislation.

* * *

BAY OF FUNDY

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bay of Fundy is a Canadian icon that boasts the highest tides in the world. It stretches 270 kilometres between the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and is home to over 12 species of whales. It is also home to the world's oldest reptile fossils and Canada's oldest dinosaur remains.

I am proud to say that the Bay of Fundy is the only Canadian entry left in the New 7 Wonders of Nature competition. This global competition allows individuals to vote for their seven favourite wonders. At the end of the voting process, the seven entries that receive the highest number of votes will be named to the New 7 Wonders of Nature.

The contest deadline is November 11 of this year. I encourage all Canadians to vote for the Bay of Fundy at www.new7wonders.com and ensure that this Canadian icon gets the international recognition it deserves.

*Statements by Members***DAYS OF AWE**

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight will mark the beginning of what are called the "Days of Awe" in the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are observed by Jewish families around the world.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada, I extend our best wishes to those observing these important days. For myself, I shall be spending time celebrating and reflecting with my own family.

May this be a year of sweetness and harmony, a year of peace and justice.

Shana Tova.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to offer my sincerest gratitude to the people of Richmond Hill, one of Canada's most diverse communities nestled in the heart of the GTA. I am deeply humbled that the good people of Richmond Hill have given me their confidence to represent them here in Canada's Parliament.

Since being elected, I have spoken with many residents, businesses and volunteer organizations, listening to their concerns and conveying our government's resolve to work tirelessly to fulfill our promise to maintain a stable economy with a greater emphasis on Canadian families. With much conviction, we will strive to ensure that every citizen feels included and that the concerns of today are addressed so that they do not become the worries of tomorrow.

For we know that the prosperity of our great nation as a whole depends upon its regional strengths and successes. Our strong, stable, national Conservative majority government will ensure the future prosperity of Canada, a country anyone would be proud to call home.

* * *

● (1410)

SALMON RESTORATION SOCIETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society is a group of extremely dedicated volunteers working in the area from the Sooke Basin to the San Juan River in my riding. Twelve creeks and rivers stand to benefit from their work in rehabilitating and restoring the all important salmon habitat.

The Salmon Restoration Society and wild salmon advocates like Alexandra Morton have been working hard to protect pacific salmon habit so that local streams will once again produce the salmon that are so important for first nations, sport fishing, recreation and tourism.

The Salmon Restoration Society is a very successful partnership of community volunteers, small businesses, local government, Royal Roads University and the T'Sou-ke and Pacheedaht First Nations.

On September 25, the society opened its Charters Creek Salmon Habitat Restoration and Interpretive Centre.

I would like to congratulate the dedicated volunteers and also those who donated equipment and supplies in order to help restore salmon habitat on the west coast of Vancouver Island in my riding.

* * *

UNASHAMED: JOURNEY TO HOPE

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at 7 p.m. next Tuesday, October 4 at the National Library and Archives on Wellington Street, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul and I, together with Samaritan's Purse, will be hosting a special screening of Listen UP TV's new documentary *Unashamed: Journey to Hope*.

The documentary is the story of Sara, from the heart of Addis Ababa, a young girl who was exploited, trafficked and robbed of her self-worth. The documentary tells of her journey out of darkness and back to dignity and hope as she experiences God's unconditional love and builds a new life for herself and her young daughter.

I invite all members to this event so that we all can be aware of our work ahead to help women who are being abused and exploited in Canada and abroad.

* * *

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins tonight. Jewish families in York Centre and across Canada will be gathering to celebrate this important holiday, reflecting on our past and praying for a brighter future.

This is indeed a new year and a new era for relations between Canadians and the Jewish people. I thank the Prime Minister, the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for standing with the Jewish community.

In combatting anti-Semitism, our government is leading the world. Canada refused to participate in the Durban II and III conferences. We have taken a principled stand against this growing form of anti-Semitism.

From standing up for a negotiated two party resolution between Israel and Palestine, to announcing support of a three year national task force on holocaust research, remembrance and education, to creating the communities at risk security fund to provide grants for synagogues and Jewish schools, to becoming the first country to sign the Ottawa protocol, our government has demonstrated unwavering support for Israel, the Jewish people and for human rights around the world.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy and sweet New Year.

Shana Tova.

[Translation]

WOMEN OF L'ANSE-À-VALLEAU

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the extraordinary work done by women in L'Anse-à-Valleau, in the Gaspé, who for 20 years have fought tirelessly for recognition of the important role played by Pointe-à-la-Renommée in Canada's maritime history.

Blandine and Priscilla Poirier, as well as Marianne Côté from the local development committee in L'Anse-à-Valleau, worked hard to finally get recognition for the creation of Canada's maritime telegraphy service.

Thanks to these women, the 1904 construction by Marconi himself of the first maritime radio station in North America at Pointe-à-la-Renommée was recognized as a national historic event by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

Thank you and congratulations to Blandine and Priscilla Poirier and to the entire local development team in L'Anse-à-Valleau.

* * *

[English]

TERRY FOX NATIONAL SCHOOL DAY RUN

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the Terry Fox National School Day Run. On this day, school kids across Canada will honour the memory of Terry Fox by running to raise money for cancer research. Through their actions, they are demonstrating the power of Terry's legacy and proving that cancer can be beaten.

I am proud to note that through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, our government is funding \$171 million for cancer research this year alone. This funding is supporting initiatives such as the Terry Fox new frontiers program in Canada, a partnership between the Terry Fox Research Institute and the Institute of Cancer Research. Thirteen million dollars has been invested in this program to support Canadian research programs in cancer that explore new frontiers in cure oriented research, just as Terry Fox pushed through new frontiers.

It is with pride that I can say that our government's investment in research programs is helping us make headway in the fight against cancer. By investing in health research today, all Canadians will benefit tomorrow.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 90 years ago, Canadian women obtained the right to vote. Close to 80 years ago, they were legally recognized as persons.

The last election marked another achievement: the NDP ran a record number of female candidates. Thanks to the support of the Canadian public, women make up 40% of the NDP caucus. I am very proud to have been a part of this historic moment. I am also very proud of these women, whom I admire and respect, and who

Statements by Members

elected me chair of the NDP's women's caucus. I thank them for their support.

The evolution of the status of women in the western world has created a domino effect that can still be seen today around the world. The fact that Saudi Arabian women obtained the right to vote in municipal elections shows that the path forged by Canadian women is still guiding the evolution of many societies.

We must continue on this path and not downplay the importance of our actions today for the future of billions of women around the world.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been given a strong mandate by Canadians to deliver on our election promises. Earlier today, the agriculture minister welcomed the report of the industry working group on marketing freedom. The report included input from over 50 individuals or organizations representing virtually all aspects of the grain value chain.

Unlike the opposition's fear mongering, the industry experts confirmed that the sky would not fall in an open market but that the sky is the limit. The report will help the government fulfill our longstanding promise to allow western Canadian grain farmers to decide how they market their grain, whether that is individually or through a voluntary Canadian Wheat Board.

I ask that all members follow the leadership of the government and support our farmers. Regardless of how few votes it received in the west, the opposition should stop treating western Canadian grain farmers like second-class citizens and work with us to give farmers the right to choose how they market their grains. It is a right that farmers want and deserve.

* * *

GREATER VANCOUVER FOOD BANK SOCIETY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the House how a seed planted by passion can grow and spur corporate social responsibility. Today is the third annual Compassion into Action food bank fundraiser benefiting the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society.

Oral Questions

This event began in 2009, when Nature's Path Foods founder Arran Stephens was inspired after hearing the Dalai Lama speak in Vancouver. His family began Compassion into Action, which has raised more than \$300,000 in the last two years. It is supported by local companies such as Vancity, Ethical Bean Coffee and Olympic Dairy. Together they have been able to help feed more than 12,000 families in need through the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society.

I have supported this initiative from the beginning. Now I want to congratulate all of the businesses involved and the Stephens family for their investments in those less fortunate in our community. I hope for the day when we will no longer have a need for food banks.

* * *

• (1420)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's top priority is the completion of the economic recovery. With a still fragile global economy, Canadians have given us a strong mandate to implement our low tax plan to create jobs and economic growth. It is a plan that is working.

The Bank of Montreal deputy chief economist told the finance committee yesterday that "compared to policy-making in the rest of the world, Canada's economic policy-making has been exemplary".

While the NDP does what it can to oppose jobs and growth with still too many Canadians out of work, the government continues to remain focused on Canada's top priority.

People in my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville want to get back to work. The government is supporting their efforts with initiatives such as the hiring credit for small businesses. The government will continue to keep Canada on the right path.

* * *

[Translation]

PATRIATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered its decision on patriating the Constitution. This new Constitution brought positive changes, such as a charter of rights that puts peoples' individual rights before those of the state. Yet, Quebecers, now recognized as a nation, are the only Canadians to have had this Constitution forced on them against their will.

The NDP is proposing a third option for reconciling the hopes of the Quebec nation with our place in Canada. Falling in between the perpetual refusal of the sovereignists who want a total breakup and the liberal conservatives who do not even want to try, the proposed NDP alternative for the future would recognize and protect Quebec's specificity, notably by preserving the proportion of Quebec's seats in the House of Commons and by protecting linguistic rights in federal workplaces in the province.

In a series of other measures, we will prove that we do not need to relive Meech Lake and Charlottetown to give the Quebec nation concrete and real recognition. That is how we will build the Canada of the future. That is the path set out by Jack Layton and the NDP.

LIBYA

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Monday, a crushing majority of members voted in favour of extending Canada's involvement in Libya. A total of 198 members stood in support and their votes sent a clear message to the Libyan people: they can count on Canada during this post-Gadhafi transition.

At that time, the members of the official opposition refused to support the Libyan people, they refused to support the excellent work of the members of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy. They believe that the job is finished.

[English]

They are wrong. The job is not done and Canada does not cut and run. We do not shirk our responsibilities. We will continue to protect and promote Canadian values around the world. We will support the Libyan people as they build a brighter future for themselves.

The NDP members of this place should be ashamed of their vote on Monday. They are wrong on the issues and incoherent on foreign policy. The NDP proves yet again it is just not fit to govern.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister met with the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what was discussed at that meeting and whether he now has an action plan to deal with the economic crisis?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, we have an economic action plan. That is why we received a mandate from Canadians. Clearly, we are concerned about the developments in Europe and elsewhere, but at the same time, over 600,000 jobs have been created in Canada. That is one of the best records in the industrialized world. That is the path we will continue to take.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the Standing Committee on Finance, economists said that the Prime Minister's fiscal approach is missing the mark. Doug Porter of BMO said that the Prime Minister's prescription for the economy, namely, more restraint, is the wrong approach.

The Prime Minister needs to realize this. He needs to realize that his economic strategy has created a structural deficit, the worst deficit in the history of the country. We are now facing a second recession under his watch.

Why does the Prime Minister insist on pursuing this course of action?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this question does not make sense. The hon. member is advocating that we increase the deficit. We want to reduce the deficit. The government's position is clear. We have a major deficit but it is still much smaller than that of other countries, and we will ensure that the budget is balanced while the economy continues to grow.

* * *

[English]

POVERTY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Council of Welfare said today that poverty costs Canada more than \$24 billion a year, double what it would cost to lift every Canadian out of poverty. Tolerating poverty is bad economics.

The council calls for an investment approach toward poverty, for example, by investing in housing, early childhood education and aboriginal employment. Why not have a strategy to end poverty, save money and help the economy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how we tackle poverty first and foremost is by ensuring the economy is growing, creating jobs, making investments in such things as housing and education, as well as providing tax breaks for people entering the workforce, as the Minister of Finance has done. These are things this government has done and is proud to have done. What is a mystery to everyone is why the NDP consistently votes against these policies.

* * *

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is now 111 days since the Muskoka minister was put in the doghouse and his handlers still cannot get their stories straight. They keep telling us that all the projects came in under budget, so let us talk about the Gravenhurst arena.

The minister personally intervened and moved it out of the Muskoka slush fund and said he would get the funding elsewhere. Now the documents show that this gave the three amigos—the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister—a much larger pot of goodies.

Will the minister explain why he personally intervened? Will he explain why this project is now the subject of a police investigation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts on this issue have not changed. This has been thoroughly aired.

I say to my friend opposite that of the 32 projects I approved under this initiative, not one involved an arena in Gravenhurst.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who was approving the money then? This is about a minister who misused the taxpayers' dollars, used his BlackBerry to get a friend a job, used his office to run a slush fund, and relied on the Prime Minister to grease the wheels.

Oral Questions

The Gravenhurst project blew the budget. People were fired. The cops were called in. Does the minister think that is an appropriate way to abuse the public trust? It has been 111 days. Will he please stand and take accountability for his actions?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Not one G8 project involved the construction of a hockey arena in the town of Gravenhurst, not one of the 32 projects. I cannot be any clearer than that. The member opposite has the right to his own opinion but he certainly does not have the right to create his own facts.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking in Lima, Peru, in November 2009, the Prime Minister told that gathering that Canada was not going to make the mistake of balancing the books at all costs, even if it meant raising taxes and slashing public spending. These were the mistakes that led to the Great Depression, he told the gathering.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister, if those words are correct, and I think most economists around the world would say that they are correct, does he not now recognize that circumstances have changed once again? The world is on the brink of a major recession, slowdown is all around us.

What will it take for the government to change course, once again?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to run a significant deficit, as is appropriate at these times, but we are taking steps to ensure the budget will balance as the economy grows.

The difference between our position and the position of the hon. member, especially when he had premier responsibilities, was that no matter what circumstances we have, his position was we always increase the deficit. If times are good, we increase the deficit. If times are bad, we increase the deficit. And in the times in between, we increase the deficit.

Obviously, we use a steadier and more prudent judgment in managing the economy.

• (1430)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last five years, the government raised spending, on average, by 18%, by \$70 billion. The Prime Minister is in absolutely no position to lecture anyone in Canada on the subject of finances or anything else.

The question the Prime Minister has to answer is this. What is he going to do when the circumstances change? A payroll tax increase of \$1.2 billion is now planned for January 2012. Would he at the very least cancel that payroll tax?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member gets on his feet to say, "You're spending too much money. Why don't you spend more?" That is the kind of position we have come to anticipate from the member. Of course, this government's economic record has been mandated by the Canadian people and praised by analysts around the world.

Frankly, everybody in this country has the right to lecture the hon. member about how he managed the Ontario economy.

* * *

[Translation]

PRESIDENT OF THE TREASURY BOARD

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board admitted publicly to the press that he was willing to appear before a committee of this House to answer some questions.

I have a very simple question for the Prime Minister. If the minister would rather answer questions before a committee, why does he still refuse to provide any information or answers to the very clear questions asked in this House during question period?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has already responded to all of these questions here in the House of Commons. I am surprised to see the Liberal Party continuing on this path, after the election results. The Auditor General examined this issue. The government accepted her recommendations and we have answered all of the questions.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): This government, which is out of touch with reality, continues to boast about its record, but its failure to act speaks volumes. The job situation is worse than it is letting on. Since the recession, 200,000 more Canadians do not have jobs.

When will this minister stop twisting the figures? When will this out-of-touch government take action and start creating jobs?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the figure is very clear. The figure is 600,000 net new jobs. Those are the jobs that have been created in the Canadian economy since the end of the recession in July 2009.

It is also clear, if the member opposite wants to look at the figures in the G7, that is the best job creation rate in the G7 since the end of the recession.

Can we do more? Yes. Are we doing more? Yes.

There is a hiring credit for small business. It will be in the budget bill next week. I hope the member opposite votes for it.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government likes to talk about its job creation record, but the numbers just do not add up. So here are the facts. There are 500,000 more people available for work since the recession. Only half that number of jobs have been recovered. That is one job for every two unemployed people, nothing to brag about.

Unemployment is rising. Canadians are tired of talk. When will the government stop spinning the numbers and start taking some real action on job creation?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member can speak louder, but it is still wrong. There are 600,000 net new jobs, 80% of them full-time jobs in Canada, the best job creation record in the G7.

We anticipate having the strongest growth in the G7 in the next two years. That is what the IMF says and that is what the OECD said. And Moody's has just renewed Canada's top credit rating in the world, triple A.

•(1435)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the finance minister is out of touch with everyday Canadians, but it seems that he is out of touch with his Ontario buddies too. The finance minister claims jobs are being created in Ontario, but at last night's debate, the Ontario Conservative leader said that over 300,000 good manufacturing jobs have been lost in Ontario alone.

Could the finance minister tell us whose math is wrong, the federal Conservatives or the Ontario Conservatives?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will not get involved in provincial politics. I will get into trouble at home.

We have had substantial job creation across the country, 600,000 net new jobs and that includes participation of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is good manufacturing jobs are being lost and the government refuses to act. Mill closures, boarded up factories, more and more jobs flying overseas. That is the reality for working families in Ontario.

New Democrats have long been calling for action. Now even the Ontario Conservative leader sees it is a problem. Why will this out of touch government finally take real action and create jobs? Where is the jobs plan?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are following an expansionary economic policy. If we look now at what we are doing in terms of transfers, they continue to increase. Transfers are very important for the provinces for health, education and social services. That is just the opposite of what was done in the mid-90s by the previous Liberal government that cut transfers unilaterally to the provinces.

So we are following an expansionary fiscal policy. We are going to return to a balanced budget. We think that is important and I am sure the member opposite would agree, looking at the trouble that some other countries in the world have gotten into by accumulating substantial deficits over time and building up large public debt.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***SERVICE CANADA**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the scandals involving the President of the Treasury Board keep piling up, while services for Canadians are being cut. People do not understand why there are some rules for his friends and other rules for ordinary people. There is going to be less help available at Service Canada centres and some are going to close altogether. I am talking about services that directly affect the public and not just his friends.

In the meantime, the minister responsible for the cuts is refusing to answer questions in the House and refusing to talk to journalists. Am I going to have to send my questions to him on Twitter to get him to respond?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be no Service Canada offices closing and no impact on in-person services offered. Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to complete Canada's economic recovery, create jobs, and return to balanced budgets. Improving the way we deliver EI services to Canadians by modernizing the way we accomplish this is one of our goals.

Our government is committed to effective and efficient use of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

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*[Translation]***G8 SUMMIT**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for that brilliant response.

Every day we learn about new projects in which the minister was personally involved with the help of his constituency office staffers. He told his friends not to worry, that whatever could not be included in the G8 budget would be included in the economic action plan. That is serious.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs keeps telling us that the Auditor General had access to all the information in order to conduct her investigation. Now that we know that is not true, are we going to start getting real answers?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General presented a report.

The government has fully accepted the advice that she provided on ways we can improve the reporting to Parliament in the years to come. We thank her for her work. We have aired all of the responses to the questions that have been brought up on this issue.

What Canadians expect their members of Parliament to be doing is to be focusing on their priorities: the creation of jobs, economic growth, hope and opportunity. That is what the government is doing, focusing like a laser on the priority of Canadian families, the economy.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need investments urgently to reduce congestion and avoid further thickening of our border. Our prosperity and our economy depend on this, things like a modern rail tunnel, improved Nexus, and border infrastructure that will reduce wait times.

The Prime Minister's own guidelines say that Treasury Board should "provide oversight of the government's financial management and spending".

Could the President of the Treasury Board explain why money was siphoned from important border infrastructure projects to get himself re-elected? Why is he more important?

• (1440)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has made unprecedented financial commitments to support border infrastructure, nowhere more anywhere in Canada than in Windsor, Ontario where the government has a strong partnership with the provincial government, a strong partnership with the State of Michigan and the Obama administration in Washington.

We are working tremendously hard to ensure that trade can flow better across that border. What we need is for New Democrats to stand in their place and say that they support free trade, that they support free trade with the United States, and that they support NAFTA.

Will the member opposite do that?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is tolerating ministers who fail to understand their role or why they are entrusted with money. A \$50 million fund was set up for projects that supposedly were related to the G8 summit. I want to remind the ministers and the government that this money was meant to be used to improve border infrastructure, including what is in my riding.

Will our government finally allow the truth to come out on this waste of public money?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the member that this government under this Prime Minister brought forward an \$8 billion building Canada infrastructure program to support economic growth, to support the expansion of the Canadian economy, and all \$8 billion of that fund were voted against.

New Democrats voted against every single dollar of that fund. Shame on the member. Shame on the New Democratic Party.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week Canada's first nations kicked off national efforts for first nations education. Their message is simple, every first nation child must have equal access to quality education under control of first nations. This was Shannen Koostachin's dream. Evidence shows education is crucial to breaking cycles of poverty and hopelessness.

Oral Questions

Will the government commit today to end the 2% cap on funding, and provide full and adequate support for first nations education?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working with our willing partners to improve the educational outcomes of first nations across the country.

That is why the national chief and myself announced the national panel. It is doing good work across the country. It is totally independent. The government has not constrained the panel in any way. Its recommendations should be coming forward in December or January. In the meantime, we will wait to see the good work that it will produce.

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PRESIDENT OF THE TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, most Canadians were profoundly disturbed to learn that the President of the Treasury Board spent \$50 million of their hard-earned money the way he did. They are even more disturbed by the fact that he will not get up and explain himself.

I do not know how he can look Canadians in the eyes and tell them that he is behaving responsibly. How can the President of the Treasury Board of all people think that he is beyond the scrutiny of this House when it comes to accountability of public funds?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Infrastructure Canada approved 32 projects to support the G8 infrastructure under the three categories provided. I approved all 32 of those projects. There was a contribution agreement written up for each of those 32 projects.

The Auditor General has made some helpful comments about what we can do to be more transparent to the House of Commons in the future. We fully accept those recommendations and will follow them in the future.

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MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence made a public declaration that, while a guest at a luxury fishing lodge, neither his host nor his companions had any business dealings with the Government of Canada, and yet the facts speak very differently.

Mr. Rob Crosbie is a political appointee in control of a federal crown corporation that receives \$200 million in annual subsidies from which he draws a personal salary. How does the minister square this contradiction and, while I am on my feet, was the fish this big or just this big?

• (1445)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said a number of times, I was on personal time in Gander, Newfoundland with some friends on a trip I paid for myself. As a result of work, I made the decision to go back to work early.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2002 the current Prime Minister criticized a minister for staying at a cottage owned by a client of his department. At the time, the current Prime

Minister said that he had either acted extraordinarily unethically or extraordinarily stupidly.

My question is for the Prime Minister. When a minister accepts a vacation at a luxury fishing lodge owned by the chair of Marine Atlantic, would he say that minister was acting extraordinarily unethically or extraordinarily stupidly?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as has been made clear, the minister paid for his own vacation, so obviously the facts are different. If anyone in the Liberal Party actually has any evidence that the minister or anyone else acted improperly, he or she can say so outside the House.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to keep Canadians in the dark about the price tag of his crime bill. It is all about transparency. Yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that this bill will cost billions of dollars. Yet this government still will not explain its impact on the country's future.

How can this government be so irresponsible as to force the passage of a bill without disclosing how much it will cost?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we tabled hundreds of pages for the member's edification before the standing committee just before the last election.

However, if he is worried about the costs, I hope that he could just spend a bit of time worrying about the cost to victims in this country because this is who the bill targets. It gets those violent individuals, those individuals who sexually exploit others and the people in the drug trafficking business off the street, and that should have the support of the hon. member and his party for a change.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is shocking that the government is ramming the bill through the House and yet refusing to tell Canadians anything about what it costs.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer told us yesterday that it was unprecedented, in his 30-year career, to have such a major piece of legislation that we know will cost billions of dollars. The cost is not turning up in a single government document. There are no budget items on this whatsoever, not a single line anywhere.

When will the government come clean on what it will cost the Canadian taxpayer?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we report to Parliament about the costs of the individual pieces of legislation.

The NDP says that it knows it will cost billions. I would ask the member to table all those documents that he has. That would be very interesting because they are completely out of line with what we have been saying and what we have laid before Parliament.

We should try to agree on something. I think we can all agree that if we spent \$1 fighting crime in this country, it would be opposed by the NDP.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see that, for all the government's crime rhetoric, one of its top priorities is to roll back the clock on legal protections against extremist hate speech.

Will the minister tell Canadians why the government is moving to make it easier for racist, sexist and anti-Semitic commentary to flourish online?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the member is referring to. The bill before Parliament targets drug dealers, the people who traffic in narcotics, the people who bring drugs into this country and the people who sexually exploit children. That is the government legislation. What is she referring to?

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister may wish to listen to what some of his colleagues are saying in press conferences or in what they are tabling before this House.

We learned this morning that a number of Conservative MPs believe that hate speech laws are futile. In our communities, hate speech all too often results in acts of violence. It is irresponsible for the government to repeal these laws and it shows that the government is out of touch with reality and Canadian values.

Can the minister prove that he is committed to protecting Canadians from hate speech?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we protect all victims in this country. We consult with victims across this country. We sit down with them. We hear what they have to say. The bill that is before Parliament right now, Bill C-10, reflects those concerns.

What I will do for the hon. member, because she should hear from those victims' groups as well, is ask those groups that when they come to Ottawa again to please spend a bit of time with the NDP and the Liberals so they will know the things that we know that we are legislating on.

* * *

• (1450)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were justifiably shocked to learn that in Saudi Arabia a woman can face a punishment of 10 lashes for the simple act of driving a car, a routine act for most women in any democracy.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs contemplate bringing issues such as this one to the attention of his counterparts around the world?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has enjoyed good diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for many years but reports of a Saudi woman being sentenced to 10 lashes for the crime of driving her own car are deeply disturbing.

Although we have heard some positive signs of reform announced in recent weeks, I think I speak on behalf of all members of the House when I condemn, in the sharpest terms, this deeply offensive court decision.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we now know that the Minister of National Defence was visiting a fishing lodge so that he could meet with some of his well-connected friends. The chair of Marine Atlantic, Mr. Crosbie, obtained his job from his Conservative connections and now he is hosting the minister at his fishing lodge.

Does the minister really think it is appropriate for him to use valuable military search and rescue resources to visit Conservative appointees?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has it wrong again. He has been wrong all week. He has made misleading statements in the House before.

I was there on a trip that I paid for myself. I spent some time with my friends in beautiful Newfoundland and Labrador. I made the decision to leave the trip early to come back to work.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister had been warned there were barely enough helicopters to meet basic search and rescue requirements.

Our search and rescue response standard of two hours is the worst in the world. Replacing our 50-year-old fixed-wing SAR aircraft is stalled because of government mismanagement. The government is closing down rescue centres in Quebec and St. John's, and the closest SAR helicopter to the Arctic is in Ontario.

Why will the minister not fix search and rescue in Canada instead of using SAR assets as personal transportation?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all search and rescue assets that are involved in exercises or demonstrations would immediately divert if they were called upon. The member knows that because he has participated in these as well.

When it comes to the issue of military procurement, support for the military, support for economic measures, the record of the New Democratic Party is a train wreck on the economy and heretics on military procurements.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian search and rescue helicopter fleet can barely meet demand. The situation is so serious that parts are taken from one helicopter and used on another. Nevertheless, one of just three helicopters based in Gander, one of the regions with the greatest need, was used by the minister for a pleasure trip.

How many helicopters will have to be grounded before the minister stops using them as his personal taxis?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I left the trip early to go back and do some work.

With respect to the search and rescue assets, as a result of pressing needs, the Department of National Defence has purchased a large number of spares from the United States, at a very reasonable price I might add, that came about as a result of a project cancellation. With that purchase and those new parts, we will be able to significantly increase the availability and yearly flying time of the Cormorant fleet.

It was the cancellation of this important contract replacement by a previous Liberal government that left us in the situation where we are flying 50-year-old helicopters.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister misused DND resources when our search and rescue helicopters can barely meet needs. If the minister is so interested in search and rescue operations, we again wonder why the St. John's and Quebec City search and rescue centres are being closed.

What is this government's priority—fishing trips or providing services to the public and the tools to which the military is entitled?

● (1455)

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consolidation of the sub-centres into the existing Joint Rescue Coordination Centres will have no negative impacts on the current level of service provided by the Canadian Coast Guard. This does not in any way affect the availability of Coast Guard ships, the Coast Guard auxiliary or the Canadian Forces aircraft. The consolidation represents a positive change by locating all Maritime air search and rescue coordinators into the same centres working side by side.

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GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt attacked his own Conservative government today over the decision to provide \$6 million to the International Planned Parenthood Federation. He said:

The battle over the IPPF continues. ... The government only responds to Pro-Life issues and concerns when we take an aggressive stance. We will apply this lesson.

Would the government categorically state that it will not yield to such threats and will ensure that women around the globe have

access to evidence-based programs that include safe abortion and family planning services?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question because it gives me a chance to say what Canada, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, has done to save the lives of women and children.

It was reported last week at the United Nations that more progress is being made to reduce the rate of maternal mortality in the last year than over the past decade. Canada focused its Muskoka initiative on improving the health of mothers and children and taking real action, such as preventing malaria, better nutrition and training more midwives. We were clear on our criteria and we will fund projects—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. Paul's.

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*[Translation]***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, the quality of life gap between our first nations and other Canadians continues to grow, and the government has not managed to work with the first nations to resolve the problem.

Will the government commit, through a new partnership among governments, to provide equal funding for services of equal quality, as called for by the National Chief, Mr. Atleo?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to treat taxpayer money prudently. I had a meeting yesterday with 20 chiefs from the province of Quebec—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The member has asked a question. I would hope that her colleagues want to hear the answer.

The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to deal with budgetary items in a prudent way. We are doing that. We are sensitive to the needs of our first nations and aboriginal people.

I have had meetings in this regard and will continue to behave in a responsible manner.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned that the Conservative government has threatened to pull the plug on the RCMP in British Columbia if the province does not accept a new policing contract by November.

The Conservatives are callously willing to jeopardize public safety in order to ram through a new contract with the province. Instead of being tough on crime, they are being tough on our front-line officers and tough on provinces.

Is pulling police off the streets in British Columbia part of the government's so-called crime agenda?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is willing to renew contract policing agreements with the provinces. After four intensive years of negotiations, it is now up to the provinces to decide whether to come on board.

The same fundamental terms and conditions will apply to all provinces. Saskatchewan and Alberta have accepted the agreement. British Columbia will have to decide whether to accept the agreement.

• (1500)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government likes to talk tough on crime, but when it comes to front-line police, it continues to fall down on the job. It is telling the government in British Columbia to take it or leave it on the contract offer.

British Columbians need to know that the result of these negotiations will not be a threat to the safety of their communities. Will the minister stand in the House right now and commit that the RCMP is staying put in British Columbia? Will the government stop playing fast and loose with the safety of British Columbians in these negotiations by telling British Columbia to take it or leave it?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not up to the federal government to determine how the province wishes to carry out its provincial responsibilities in respect of policing. We have been negotiating now for four years. There have been intensive negotiations for four years. Some of the provinces have accepted the agreement, some have not yet decided. It is up to the provinces to make that decision. We do not force provinces to accept the RCMP. We think it is a good deal, but it is up to the provinces to do it.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I tabled in the House my private member's bill, an act respecting the national flag of Canada. The purpose of this enactment is to ensure that all Canadians have the right to fly the national flag of Canada.

The Canadian flag represents all Canadian citizens. It represents pride in our great nation and support for those who have sacrificed their lives for the principles which it embodies: freedom, democracy, courage, and the justice upon which our great nation was built.

Could the minister tell the House how important the Canadian flag is to our heritage?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the member for Don Valley West for his incredible leadership early in this Parliament. Our flag is indeed loved by all Canadians and respected all around the world. It is a symbol of our freedom, a symbol of our democracy and a symbol of our unity.

I applaud and support the member's bill so that we can have absolute clarity with federal law. Any Canadian who wishes to fly the Canadian flag should be able to do so, free from bullying, free from intimidation, and to do so proudly as a Canadian from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Remembrance Day is just around the corner. That day gives us an opportunity to remember the tremendous sacrifices made by Canadians and to pay tribute to those who died for our country.

Why does the government pay up to \$13,000 for Canadian Forces members' funerals, but only \$3,600 for veterans' funerals? Why does this government care more about gazeboes than veterans?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. This allows me to highlight the excellent work of the funeral and burial program, which is managed by the last post fund, with which we work closely. Assistance for funerals and burials is offered to veterans who have suffered injuries related to their service, regardless of their rank or the medals they have received. We will continue working with the last post fund and exploring other ways to provide quality services to our veterans.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to leaked U.S. diplomatic cables, Khaled Samy Abdallah Ismail was arrested and sent to a secret U.S. detention facility in Afghanistan because of suspicious behaviour. It turns out he has a mental illness and was deemed low risk. It took eight months for a consular official to visit him, and nine months more for him to get home.

Why the delay in providing basic consular services to a Canadian citizen in need?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my hon. friend for her question and also to welcome her to this important file. I am going to enjoy working with her.

Points of Order

I have to inform the hon. member that we do not comment on the contents of leaks. I would also point out that the document she is referring to is not a Canadian diplomatic cable.

* * *

● (1505)

UKRAINE

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ukraine has undergone a considerable transformation since the beginning of the Orange Revolution. However, what originally seemed an unstoppable wave of democratic freedom has since gone sour with the news that former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko is being politically persecuted.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please make crystal clear for the House Canada's concerns with Ukraine's political situation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has expressed to the Ukrainian government our serious concern about the apparent bias in the ongoing judicial proceedings against former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko. Political persecution is completely unacceptable. The appearance of political bias in judicial proceedings undermines the rule of law.

We urge, here today, the Ukrainian government to strengthen judiciary independence. We will continue to support efforts to build a peaceful democratic and prosperous society in Ukraine.

* * *

CANADIAN AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 1959 the Diefenbaker government scrapped the Avro Arrow, and much of the Canadian aviation industry along with it, throwing 30,000 Canadians out of work. Now this Conservative government has done it again. Last week it evicted the world's only replica of the Avro Arrow, along with hundreds of veteran volunteers.

Canadian veterans have asked their minister to reverse this disdainful decision. Will the Conservatives listen to Canadian veterans and allow their museum to continue?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member more than likely knows that this museum is on the land of Downsview Park, which is a crown corporation. This was a business decision made by Downsview.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice is claiming that Canadians approve of his omnibus justice bill. That is certainly not the case in Quebec, as we can see by the reactions of the National Assembly, the Quebec bar association and the youth centres. By imposing a gag order, the government is showing that it will stop at nothing to impose measures that have been formally rejected by Quebec.

What will it take before the Minister of Justice understands that Quebec is saying no to counterproductive measures that do not leave room for rehabilitation and increase imprisonment of young people.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bill targets those who are involved with organized crime, the people who traffic in drugs, the people who bring drugs into this country, and the people who sexually exploit children. Canadians have not rejected that, but I know Quebec rejected the Bloc. We know that for sure.

* * *

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Jakup Krasniqi, President of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**ORAL QUESTIONS**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising out of question period because of inaccuracies made by the government side regarding my questions in terms of the Gravenhurst centre.

I have the documents here. The government might not be aware of this project that it supported. I would like to table these documents, as well as the *Toronto Star* article of April 21, 2011, which refers to the police investigation that is ongoing. The documents are here.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to table the documents?

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I just want to respond to my friend opposite.

The taxpayers of Canada provide a lot of money to the official opposition for research. We encourage the opposition to use it for that and not simply to get a subscription to the *Toronto Star*.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite should stand in his place and apologize. The project in Gravenhurst was funded by FedDev Ontario. It is a conflict between the municipality and the contractor. It is before the courts. This government had nothing—

● (1510)

The Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, question period has concluded for today. Members may wish to pursue these matters at a later date, but certainly not on a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GLOBAL CENTRE FOR PLURALISM

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Global Centre for Pluralism's annual report for 2010 and its corporate plan summary for 2011.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the Canadian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, OSCE PA, respecting its participation at the Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from May 14 to 16, 2010, and at the fall meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Palermo, Italy, from October 8 to 11, 2010.

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-289, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (nanotechnology).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, nanotechnology presents real opportunities for innovations across all economic sectors that could bring benefits to Canadians, including better health care, a cleaner environment and safer products. Along with these opportunities come potential risks. Nanotechnology creates real health and safety concerns, both for Canadian consumers and workers, as well as important environmental safety concerns.

We have been working for the last few months with grassroots groups and science and environmental experts to address this regulatory gap in Canadian legislation. This bill is a step toward addressing some of these critical shortfalls and ensuring the safe and responsible development of nanotechnology. If passed, the bill would amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to include nanotechnology. The bill lays out consistent risk assessment processes, prioritizes research on the safety of nanotechnology, and establishes a much needed national inventory of nanotechnologies.

I certainly hope that this legislation will receive broad support in the House of Commons, both on the opposition side and on the government side.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple bill, matching the personality and character of the person moving it.

It is simply a repeal of one very small section of the Criminal Code. The effect it will have will be to allow for sports betting on single sporting events in this country.

This is a very important bill from this perspective. That industry is very big, and it is entirely controlled by organized crime at the present time, both here and in the United States, because it is generally illegal in the United States to bet on one sporting event.

The estimate in the United States is that \$30 billion a year is bet on that, all going into the pockets of organized crime and some of it offshore. It is estimated that as much as \$2 billion is spent in Canada annually, with all of that money going out of the country to organized crime syndicates in the U.S. and the Caribbean, so it is quite important that we move on this.

The other thing is that there is a national gaming association in Canada. It just completed a study that shows the employment that would be created by making this into a legal business. For instance, in Windsor there will be another 150 jobs either saved or added to the current employment in the Windsor casino. In the riding of the Minister of Justice there is a casino, and a similar number of jobs would either be saved or added. It is job creation.

The Province of Ontario has signalled that it is very interested in placing this operation in the casinos in that province. Other provinces are taking different perspectives on it, but there is widespread support for this bill and I am seeking support from all members of Parliament when it comes up for second reading.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1515)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (waiting period and maximum special benefits).

He said: Mr. Speaker, we all have family members or close friends who unfortunately have cancer or serious injuries that prevent them from earning an income to support their children or who are in very difficult social situations.

I have presented petitions in this House with thousands of signatures. In response to those petitions and the tireless work of Marie-Hélène Dubé, it is time to make two changes to the Employment Insurance Act.

The bill would extend the maximum period for which special benefits for illness, injury or quarantine may be paid from 15 weeks to 50 weeks. More importantly, it would also change the infamous waiting period, which forces individuals to wait two weeks before receiving money.

Routine Proceedings

By resolving this situation, we can provide some relief for these individuals. They are already suffering from their illness; they are already suffering serious social and family problems. It is time for us to fix this for them. Our role as legislators is to improve the quality of life of our constituents.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-292, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (victims' restitution and monetary awards for offenders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce an amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. This amendment will ensure that any monetary amount awarded to an offender pursuant to a legal action or proceeding would be paid to the victims and other designated beneficiaries.

This amendment ensures that victims of crime come first and that criminals do not profit from their crimes. It is another example of this government putting the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-293, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (vexatious complainants).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise in the House today to introduce Bill C-293, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (vexatious complainants).

Correctional Service Canada, CSC, receives thousands of complaints per year from offenders. A small group of convicts accounts for about 15% of the complaints that are filed. My bill seeks to address those inmates who have made a hobby of issuing complaints, who have abused the grievance process and who waste correctional institution resources by filing numerous complaints that are vexatious or frivolous in nature.

The changes contained within this bill transcend all political parties in this House and I sincerely hope that all members will support it.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1520)

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (illness or injury).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, illness and injury can strike anyone at any time. This year alone hundreds of thousands of hard-

working Canadians will be struck with catastrophic illness or serious physical injuries that prevent them from making a contribution in the workplace and providing for themselves and their families.

The amendment proposed in this bill would extend the eligible period during which workers suffering from serious injury or illness would be able to return to their jobs without fear of losing their positions from 12 weeks to 52 weeks. If passed or adopted by the government, this bill would ensure that Canadians suffering from serious illness or injury would have some peace of mind during their recovery period. It will increase the likelihood that they would be able to rejoin the workforce in the same capacities and positions they held before being forced to leave.

This is the fair and right thing to do. I hope the minister will agree and support this legislation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[Translation]

WAYS AND MEANS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I would ask for unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Monday, October 3, 2011, following the tabling of a notice of ways and means motion relating to the second Budget Implementation Bill, the said ways and means motion be deemed moved and a recorded division be deemed demanded and deferred to the expiry of time provided for Government Orders that day.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

LOBBYING ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics be the committee designated for the purpose of section 14.1 of the Lobbying Act.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House for this motion as well?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to propose the following motion: That the provisions of Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts respecting the transfer of prisoners and consisting of clause 135 do compose Bill C-10B; that the remaining provisions in Bill C-10 do compose Bill C-10A; that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary; that Bill C-10A and Bill C-10B be reprinted; and that Bill C-10B be deemed to have been read the first time and printed, deemed read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment and deemed read the third time and passed.

[Translation]

We are moving this motion because we can take practical measures for the aspects of the bill that are supported by Canadians.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Ottawa Centre have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

* * *

● (1525)

PETITIONS

GEORGETOWN SOUTH CORRIDOR

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, diesel exhaust is a known danger to public health and is linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death. Diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly. Diesel is harmful to the environment and contributes to climate change.

MetroInx is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to upwards of 400 trains per day in the Georgetown south corridor, which cuts through the west end neighbourhoods of Toronto, including my riding of Davenport. This expansion would make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet.

There are 250,000 people who live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children who attend one or more of the 200 schools near the tracks. Therefore, the undersigned call upon the Government of Canada to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south corridor, including the airport rail link, be electrified from the outset, and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.

Routine Proceedings

SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding sickle cell disease and thalassemic disorders.

Sickle cell disease affects blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout our bodies. In sickle cell disease, red blood cells harden into long slivers that block veins and arteries, causing injury to blood vessels of organs, including the brain and the lungs. About 10% of children develop strokes. Children with sickle cell are also extremely vulnerable to infection and have periodic health crises that cause terrible pain and difficulty in breathing. The lifespan of persons with sickle cell disease can be reduced by as much as 30 years.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to adopt Bill C-221, An Act respecting a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition for a number of residents in my riding of Langley.

There are a number of severe, potentially life-threatening conditions that do not qualify for disability programs because they are not necessarily permanent or because of waiting lists for surgeries, which lengthen the recovery time.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to adopt legislation to provide additional medical EI benefits for people who find themselves in such conditions, benefits at least equal to maternity EI benefits.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

First, petitioners say that child care is often not accessible or affordable for Canadian families and is often of uncertain quality. Child care creates jobs, makes Canada more competitive, helps achieve women's equality, builds local economies and is recognized as a human right.

The petitioners call on the House to legislate the right to universal access to child care and to provide multi-year funding to provincial and territorial governments to build a national system of affordable, high-quality, public and not-for-profit early childhood education and care that is accessible to all children.

The federal government must establish funding criteria and reporting mechanisms that ensure accountability for how the provinces and territories use federal funding to ensure quality, accessibility, universality and accountability and that acknowledge Quebec's right to develop social programs with adequate compensation from the federal government.

Speaker's Ruling

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with the CBC.

The petitioners say they love the CBC and call on the Prime Minister to reaffirm the importance of the national public broadcaster.

Further, they call on the Prime Minister to provide the CBC with adequate financing by raising the CBC's parliamentary grant from the current levels to \$40 for every citizen, in keeping with the recent recommendations of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

SISTERS IN SPIRIT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last petition is about the Stolen Sisters.

The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to ensure that the Native Women's Association of Canada receives sufficient funding to continue its important work of protecting women through its Sisters in Spirit initiative and to invest in the initiatives recommended by NWAC to help prevent more women from disappearing.

That is especially useful in light of the Walk for Justice that happened on Parliament Hill last week.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I bring forward a petition from prairie farmers. It asks for support for farmers in western Canada by allowing them to determine themselves the future need and role of the Canadian Wheat Board and allow for a plebiscite on the future of the CWB.

As we all know, there was a plebiscite in which in excess of tens of thousands of prairie grain wheat farmers gave a very strong message that they tried to get to the Government of Canada to retain the Canadian Wheat Board. The petitioners are challenging the government to respect the will of the tens of thousands of prairie grain farmers and allow the Canadian Wheat Board to stay in place as is. They are requesting, in essence, that the government to respect those wishes.

I share in those concerns and would ask the government to do likewise.

• (1530)

The Speaker: I see the hon. member for Davenport is rising. He has already presented a petition. It is the custom of the House that if a member has more than one petition, they should be done at the same time.

Is there unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Davenport to present an additional petition?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the undersigned of this petition call upon the government to maintain the integrity of Canada Post as a public corporation and to affirm its

commitment to the creation and protection of good jobs for all Canadians, young and old.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROCUREMENT CONCERNING CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on September 19, 2011, by the member for Malpeque concerning a notice of proposed procurement in respect of the Canadian Wheat Board.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the members for Winnipeg Centre and Winnipeg North, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board for their interventions.

[English]

Before reviewing the arguments in the case before us, it might be useful to offer members a short explanation of what constitutes a contempt of the House. Whereas the privileges that extend to members individually and to the House as a collectivity are finite and can be categorized, contempts cannot be enumerated or categorized.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, at pages 82 and 83, notes that the House claims the right to punish, as a contempt, actions which are not specific breaches of privilege, but which tend to impede the House or its members in the performance of their functions or are offences against the authority or dignity of the House. While all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege and the House of Commons enjoys a very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power.

[Translation]

As noted on page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

By far, most of the cases of privilege raised in the House relate to matters of contempt challenging the perceived authority and dignity of Parliament and its members.

[English]

In the present case, the member for Malpeque has alleged that a contempt of the House has arisen from “the presumption that the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, a procedure which can only be sanctioned by an act of Parliament, will in fact occur”. This presumption, he maintains, is evidenced by a direct reference in the notice of proposed procurement for a contract posted on the MERX Canadian Public Tenders website on August 11, 2011. To support his contention, the member for Malpeque has pointed to a statement in the notice that reads as follows:

The purpose of the audit is to provide reasonable assurance of the total financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and the dissolution or winding up of the CWB after the final pooling periods (expected to be July 31, 2012).

In his view, the posting of this notice constitutes contempt since no legislation has been tabled, let alone passed, regarding the winding up of the Canadian Wheat Board.

[Translation]

The parliamentary secretary pointed out that contrary to the assertion of the member for Malpeque, the very fact that no legislation had yet been introduced concerning the future of the Canadian Wheat Board, and that there had not been any public advertising stating when such legislation would be introduced or passed was proof enough that the government was not presuming that Parliament would take a particular decision in relation to the future of the Canadian Wheat Board.

[English]

Rather, he explained, the government had simply issued a notice of procurement asking interested and qualified suppliers to provide the government with audit information regarding the financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, if that were to occur based on certain assumptions.

In his submission, the member for Malpeque quoted from a number of rulings by my predecessors, Speakers Fraser, Parent and Milliken, pertaining to the issuance of government advertisements containing language that was seen to presume on decisions that Parliament had yet to make. The Chair has reviewed those rulings and understands why the member for Malpeque has used them in his arguments before the House. There is no doubt that they deal with the principle the member feels has been offended in this case. A close reading of the circumstances in each of the cases cited shows, however, that this particular case is not quite as analogous as the member has suggested. For example, in the case of the decision by Mr. Speaker Fraser, much of the controversy surrounded government advertisements that clearly stated a date when the then proposed new GST would come into effect. In addition, it should be noted that the MERX document now at issue was not publicized widely in the same manner as the 1989 GST advertisements.

In this case, the Chair has closely examined the wording of the notice of proposed procurement and has found no reference at all to a date by which the Canadian Wheat Board Act will be repealed. Instead, as the parliamentary secretary has pointed out, the notice requests specific audit information regarding the financial impact of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, if such a repeal occurs, and proposes certain assumptions on which to base the calculation of that impact. One of these assumptions is that the final pool period is

Government Orders

expected to be July 31, 2012. In the opinion of the Chair, the language is not absolute. The member for Malpeque has also quoted from the terms of reference of a task force the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has established. Although the Chair has not seen this document, the parts quoted by the member for Malpeque appear to use similar language.

The notice itself presents a hypothetical scenario. It does not foresee a specific timetable for legislative action, let alone presume the outcome of such action. As I see it, the notice and task force terms of reference form part of a planning process that might be expected in contemplating the possibility of the repeal of the Canadian Wheat Board Act. I know the member for Malpeque does not expect the Chair to monitor all internal processes undertaken by the government as part of its preparatory work in advance of proposing legislative measures to the House. Accordingly, I cannot agree with the hon. member for Malpeque's statement that “The government presumes that the act has been repealed, which in fact it has not”. I see no evidence of such a presumption.

● (1535)

[Translation]

In the present instance, I do not believe that the wording of the text of the notice of procurement posted on the MERX site is ambiguous: rather, in my view, it presents a hypothetical case and seeks information on the impact of such a scenario. The Chair cannot find therein a challenge to the authority or dignity of the House or its members, or the primacy of Parliament.

[English]

Therefore, I must conclude that the case does not constitute a contempt of the House and there is no *prima facie* case of privilege.

[Translation]

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SAFE STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed from September 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to add a few more comments.

Yesterday, I closed by asking about a nonsensical contradiction: how do we show respect for victims, by creating the necessary conditions to produce more victims in the coming years? I would like to explain a few other things that do not make sense before leaving the House today—

Government Orders

The Speaker: Order, please. It seems that there are problems with the interpretation. Is it fixed now? Okay.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup may resume.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to address the communities that may be tempted to support this bill thinking that a prison expansion in their area would be a good thing. The expansion of our prisons should never be considered anything other than a collective failure. Let us not forget that. Having more citizens in prison must be considered a definite sign of the failure of our training programs and the failure of our economic system to create jobs. Prisoners are not a natural resource that help the development of a region in which there is a prison. Let us always keep this perspective in mind when making these collective choices.

Another thing related to this bill that does not make sense is the fact that it affects the right of judges to simply do their work, exercising their right to judge. This is an ideological blunder. It is something that leads us to a sort of limitation on what the law should be and deprives judges of their opportunity to think. What will happen if we tell a judge that the theft of an apple is punishable by a minimum sentence of one day in prison? A judge's job is to determine whether the apple was stolen simply as mischief or whether it was stolen to feed a starving child. Any judge who does his or her work properly would not impose the same sentence in these two cases.

The government's ideological leaning is a very bad thing and it is depriving judges of their right to simply do their job. That is why the Canadian Bar Association and the Barreau du Québec are concerned about this bill and even blatantly opposed to it.

There is an important point here. This bill does not make any sense. How can judges work with a law that would lead them to impose sentences on small-time drug dealers that are twice as long as the sentences imposed on those who sexually abuse minors? That is what the bill before us is proposing.

Another thing that does not make sense is how Canadians' right to debate is being affected. By combining all these bills, the government is manipulating the public debate. The members opposite can be sure that Canadians will not be fooled. The right to a pardon is being questioned. If someone says that it is important to retain the right to a pardon, it does not mean that they support pedophilia. The two things are unrelated. The government is manipulating the debate and should apologize for insulting Canadians' intelligence.

Therefore, we have a very simple choice to make. The government is moving towards a very repressive system. I will go back to the example I began giving yesterday of the movie, *A Clockwork Orange*. In this very popular movie, young people who are discovering their leadership qualities live in such a repressive society that, to be noticed, they have no other choice but to become delinquents. The more repressive the society becomes, the more that is the choice facing these future potential young leaders: to be noticed, they must be delinquents in a repressive system.

At the other end of the spectrum, another very popular movie, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, is about a high school music teacher who fights

cuts to his budget for clarinets, saxophones and drums, and helps young future leaders to develop.

This government is ramming a choice about our society down our throats. It does not want to use any part of the \$5 billion of public money to ensure that a talented young 13-year-old girl somewhere in Canada has the clarinet that will help her to develop as a citizen, or that young people who are members of a theatre group have the money to go on a provincial tour. It has decided to invest such a huge amount in repression that there will not be enough money for education, extracurricular activities or rehabilitation that would simply lead to a lower crime rate this year, next year and for decades to come. This is a social choice that is being rammed down our throats. Canadians are not fooled and it is really a very bad choice.

● (1540)

[English]

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Madam Speaker, in listening to the member, I wonder if he had an opportunity to read part of the legislation. It would appear that he would have Canadians believe that an innocent 13 year old is growing five pot plants in his basement for his buddies whose parents will not let them smoke dope.

Has he read the parts in there where the aggravating circumstances actually kick in such as where violence has been used in selling drugs, where it is used in prisons, where it is used by abusive positions in authority, where weapons are involved? These are serious drug offences. Did the member read those aggravating circumstances?

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Madam Speaker, our colleagues form the government keep bringing up these extreme examples. Yet the bill sets out minimum sentences for minor crimes. In Quebec in particular, efforts are very focused on rehabilitating youth. In the 1980s, I had the misfortune of living in an area with a relatively high crime rate. The crime rate has dropped; rehabilitation works.

They always talk about horrific crimes like sexual abuse against a minor that involves a weapon. We completely agree that the law needs to crack down on serious crimes and sexual offences against children. We are not questioning that. It is the other part of Bill C-10, which sets out minimum sentences for minor crimes, that we do not agree with.

● (1545)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleague will know, the inclusion of so many new mandatory minimum sentences in the act removes the incentive for defendants in our court systems to reach a plea of guilty.

Has my colleague seen anything in Bill C-10 that will relieve or even mitigate the added congestion and delays in our court system that will be caused by forcing so many defendants to trial?

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I have seen nothing in the bill that would relieve the congestion for those involved in the legal process. This is an important aspect to consider and it would be respectful of everyone, including victims. As long as this is not resolved, and the legal system cannot handle the overload, the victims also suffer as they wait for the outcome of legal proceedings. My colleague brought up an excellent point. The bill tabled by our colleagues on the other side makes absolutely no mention of this.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative member of Parliament posed a question, asking "Have you read?"

I have a similar "have you read" question. This came from the *Winnipeg Free Press*. It was actually a columnist from Vancouver who had written it. The headline reads: "The Prime Minister gets tougher on pot growers than child rapists".

I would ask if the member has read this in the article:

A pedophile who gets a child to watch pornography with him, or a pervert exposing himself to kids at a playground, would receive a minimum 90-day sentence, half the term of a man convicted of growing six pot plants in his own home.

I am not sure if the member read it. I believe it to be true. Would the member agree that this is a true assessment that was written not by a member of Parliament but a columnist from Vancouver?

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I did not completely follow. I was asked to comment on this journalist's column. We are talking about a bill that sets out more severe penalties for certain minor drug production cases than some other cases. I want to make something clear. I am the father of three young children, and I would immediately agree to crack down more severely on any crime related to pedophilia. The rest of the bill is not balanced. The fact that a small producer would have a sentence twice that of someone who sexually abused a minor is simply unacceptable. I hope that is what my colleague was asking.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: That the provisions of Bill C-10, An Act to enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other Acts with respect to the youth criminal justice system, and consisting of clauses 169, 174 and 186, do compose Bill C-10B; that the remaining provisions of Bill C-10 do compose Bill C-10A; that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary. That Bill C-10A and Bill C-10B be reprinted; and that Bill C-10B be deemed to have been read the first time and be printed, deemed read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment and deemed read the third time and passed.

Government Orders

• (1550)

[English]

There are two parts to the bill. One is with regard to the young offenders part of the bill. It implements recommendations that we received from a number of the provinces as well as prohibiting the housing of young offenders with adults. That is one part.

The second part is with regard to the former Pardons Act, which would allow for the extension of the length of time that a person would have to wait to get a pardon. It is a principled stance on our part. It is a practical approach to resolving issues that are of unanimous consent, I believe, within the House.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to table this motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Brampton West.

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-10, the safe streets and communities act.

The bill would fulfill the government's commitment in the June 2011 Speech from the Throne to bundle and quickly reintroduce crime bills that died on the order paper when Parliament was dissolved for the general election.

Integral to this commitment, as articulated in the Speech from the Throne, are two key statements that I want to quote because I think they give voice to what all Canadians firmly believe.

First:

The Government of Canada has no more fundamental duty than to protect the personal safety of our citizens and defend against threats to our national security.

Second:

Our government has always believed the interests of law-abiding citizens should be placed ahead of those of criminals. Canadians who are victimized or threatened by crime deserve their government's support and protection—

In my view, this precisely characterizes Bill C-10. It packages nine former bills that, collectively, recognize and seek to protect our vulnerabilities; for example, children's vulnerability to being preyed upon by adult sexual predators, foreign workers' vulnerability to being exploited by unscrupulous Canadian employers, and our collective vulnerability to suffering the harms that go hand in hand with serious drug crimes, such as drug trafficking, production and acts of terrorism.

Knowing this, and knowing as well that many of these reforms have been previously debated, studied and passed by at least one chamber, there is no reason not to support Bill C-10 in this Parliament.

Bill C-10 is divided into five parts.

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Part 1 proposes to deter terrorism by supporting victims. It would create a new cause of action for victims of terrorism to enable them to sue not only the perpetrators of terrorism but all those who support terrorism, including listed foreign states, for loss or damage that occurred as a result of an act of terrorism or omission committed anywhere in the world on or after January 1, 1985.

The State Immunity Act would be amended to remove immunity from those states that the government has listed as supporters of terrorism. These amendments were previously proposed and passed by the Senate in the form of Bill S-7, justice for victims of terrorism act, in the previous session of Parliament. They are reintroduced in Bill C-10, with technical changes to correct grammatical and cross-reference errors.

Part 2 proposes to strengthen our existing responses to child exploitation and serious drug crimes, as well as serious violent and property crimes. It would better protect children against sexual abuse in several ways, including by uniformly and strongly condemning all forms of child sex abuse through the imposition of newer and higher mandatory minimum penalties, as well as creating new core powers to impose conditions to prevent suspected or convicted child sex offenders from engaging in conduct that could facilitate or further their sexual offences against children.

These reforms are the same as they were in former Bill C-54, protecting children from sexual predators act, with the addition of proposed increases to the maximum penalty for four offences and corresponding increases in their mandatory minimum penalties to better reflect the particularly heinous nature of these offences.

Part 2 also proposes to specify that conditional sentences of imprisonment, often referred to as house arrest, are never available for offences punishable by a maximum of 14 years or life, for offences prosecuted by indictment and punishable by a maximum penalty of 10 years that result in bodily harm, trafficking and production of drugs or that involve the use of a weapon, or for listed serious property and violent offences punishable by a maximum penalty of 10 years that are prosecuted by indictment.

These reforms were previously proposed in former Bill C-16, ending house arrest for property and other serious crimes by serious violent offenders act which had received second reading in this House and was referred to the justice committee when it died on the order paper.

It is in the same form as before with, again, a few technical changes that are consistent with the objectives of the bill as was originally introduced.

Part 2 also proposes to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to impose mandatory minimum sentences for serious offences involving production and/or possession for the purposes of trafficking and/or importing and exporting and/or possession for the purpose of exporting Schedule I drugs, such as heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine, and Schedule II drugs, such as marijuana.

● (1555)

These mandatory minimum penalties would be imposed where there is an aggravating factor, including where the production of the drug constituted a potential security, health or safety hazard, or the offence was committed in or near a school.

This is the fourth time that these amendments have been introduced. They are in the same form as they were the last time when they were passed by the Senate as former Bill S-10, Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act, in the previous Parliament.

Part 3 proposes numerous post-sentencing reforms to better support victims and to increase offender accountability and management. Specifically, it reintroduces reforms previously contained in three bills from the previous Parliament: Bill C-39, Ending Early Release for Criminals and Increasing Offender Accountability Act; Bill C-5, Keeping Canadians Safe (International Transfer of Offenders) Act; and Bill C-23B, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Bill C-10 reintroduces these reforms with some technical changes.

Part 4 reintroduces much needed reforms to the Youth Criminal Justice Act to better deal with violent and repeat young offenders. Part 4 includes reforms that would ensure the protection of the public is always considered a principle in dealing with young offenders and that will make it easier to detain youth charged with serious offences pending trial.

These reforms were also previously proposed in former Bill C-4, Sébastien's Law (Protecting the Public from Violent Young Offenders).

Part 5 proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to better protect foreign workers against abuse and exploitation. Their reintroduction in Bill C-10 reflects the fifth time that these reforms have been before Parliament, with the last version being former Bill C-56, Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act.

In short, Bill C-10 proposes many needed and welcome reforms to safeguard Canadians. Many have already been supported in the previous Parliament and Canadians are again expecting us to support them in this Parliament.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Mr. Peter Blaikie, who is a very distinguished Canadian lawyer and founder of the law firm Heenan Blaikie in Montreal and a former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, wrote an article earlier this year in August. He said:

More specifically, mandatory minimum sentences, by imposing a straitjacket on judges, limit their ability to differentiate as regards the same offence with respect to what might be completely different circumstances. Judges are human and might on occasion err; however, they are highly educated and highly trained, far better equipped to determine appropriate sentences than our members of Parliament.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he feels that he knows better than people who are trained in that way or better than Peter Blaikie.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I fundamentally disagree with the premise that our justice initiatives are not in the best interests of Canadians. My friend can quote whoever he wants to quote but I will quote from people who matter. These are victims of crime. It reads:

The Prime Minister is to be lauded for following through on his 2008 and 2011 election platform promises to bring this measure forward. Having just marked the tenth anniversary of that terrible day, I believe this decennial year is a truly appropriate time to enact this measure which will help frame this government's legacy as an unyielding foe to terror and a stalwart advocate of its victims.

This was said by C-CAT co-founder Maureen Basnicki, whose husband was murdered on 9/11. These are the people for whom we are enacting this legislation. We will stand up for victims of crime. I do not understand why the members opposite want to stand and quote people who have no interest in talking about this crime agenda.

● (1600)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, that is an interesting comment. I wonder if the member could actually speak up for the disproportionate numbers of aboriginal peoples who are incarcerated.

An article in the *Toronto Star* on February 20, indicated that there was a bleak link between poverty and incarceration. While aboriginals, many mired in poverty, represent 4% of Canada's population, they make up almost 20% of those in federal prisons.

I could, of course, quote from any number of articles that talk about the importance of preventive programs and working to keep people out of the prison population, and that includes adequate housing, health care, education, drinking water and the list goes on and on.

I wonder if the member could comment about his government's plans to do something about prevention.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's question was not particularly what I was talking about. We are talking about introducing legislation to protect Canadians from crime and to support victims of crime.

We do have an aboriginal justice strategy in place that we are working on and working very hard to implement.

However, I want to talk to the people who support this legislation. I will give the House another quote:

Whether it is by keeping dealers and producers off the streets and out of business, or by serving as a deterrent to potential dealers, this proposed legislation will help our members in doing their jobs and keeping our communities safe. In simple terms, keep these criminals in jail longer, and you take away their opportunity to traffic in drugs.

Who said that? It was President Tom Stamatakis of the Canadian Police Association. That is who we are standing up for and we are thrilled to have his support.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member's thoughts on the war on drugs. In the United States, cracking down on the traffickers is a total failure: there have never been more drugs around.

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How can the hon. member claim that the way to deal with the traffickers is to impose harsher sentences, when that approach has failed everywhere else? I do not understand his logic.

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, my friend is talking about what has happened in the United States. It is interesting that whenever members opposite want to talk about our legislation, they just blindly suggest that we are following the American model.

I have another quote for the House:

Mandatory minimum sentences for serious drug crimes will help in our fight against organized crime in the trafficking and production of drugs.

...keep these criminals in jail longer, and you take away their opportunity to traffic in drugs.

Who said that? That was said Charles Morny, president of the Canadian Police Association October, 2010.

Those are the kinds of people whose support we are happy to have. The members opposite can quote whoever they want but we are standing up for Canadians and police forces.

[Translation]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to today's debate on Bill C-10, which deals with crime.

[English]

I will first look at the context in which this bill is being introduced.

I will look at the crime rates. What is happening with the crime rates? They are dropping and they have been dropping for a long time as a matter of fact.

What is happening with the violent crime rates. They are also dropping and they have been dropping for a long time.

What about the intensity of crime? That has also been dropping.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner : Unemployment rates are going up.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Meanwhile unemployment rates, as my colleague, the member for Cape Breton—Canso, points out, have been going up.

On July 21 of this year, Statistics Canada released this information stating:

The national crime rate has been falling steadily for the past 20 years and is now at its lowest level since 1973.

In that circumstance, what might the government invest in? What would it decide to put its resources into? It could put its resources into health, but it is not doing that. It could put the money into education, but we are not seeing that. It could put an emphasis on putting funds into innovation to make our economy strong, but we do not see it. It could put funding into crime prevention.

However, what the government does instead is it puts a number in the window on a budget and says that it will spend this much on crime prevention and ends up spending far less in reality. That is where the government's priorities are.

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We know the government is not interested in the crime rates in the same way that it is not interested in data or scientific information when it comes to the census, which we all saw what happened there, when it comes to climate change and in so many other areas. In fact, the government's attitude is that it wants Canadians to be very afraid and to believe they need this kind of an agenda.

Of course we should be striving to lower crime rates because that is a good thing, and it is good that it has been happening, but is building more prisons the answer? The government is already spending a lot more money on programs that do not work and a lot more money on prisons.

In fact, let us compare what has happened in the last few years. In 2005-06, the last year of the Liberal government, \$1.6 billion were spent on the correctional service. By 2011-12, this year, that number has gone up from \$1.6 billion to \$2.98 billion, an increase of 86%. The forecast that we have already seen, and there is more coming because of this bill, is that by 2013-14, it will be \$3.15 billion, an increase of over 100%. That is just based on the changes that have been made so far, not including what is in this bill.

This bill is an amalgamation of nine previous bills, many of which this party previously offered to fast-track and move forward. However, the government did not want to do that. It wanted to play games. In fact, some of the bills were brought in and then it prorogued Parliament and tried to blame the other parties for not moving the bills forward. What a ridiculous strategy.

Meanwhile, we have the work of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, a person who was hand-picked by the Prime Minister, chosen by the government, selected to do the job, an important job, of assisting members of Parliament in assessing bills being brought forward, assessing what the government is telling us about finances, and telling us whether it is accurate or not.

The fact is that the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that just one of the government bills would add \$5 billion to the taxpayers' burden. That is the one bill that he could information from the government about. It would not give him information about the other bills.

We need to remember that we are talking about this bill amalgamating nine bills entirely, not just one. We are hearing that will cost, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, somewhere between \$10 billion and \$15 billion, although it is difficult to say since the government will not share information.

This is, after all, the biggest spending government in Canadian history. This is the government that has increased spending since it came into office by 35%. It increased spending by 18% in its first three years. That was before the recession began.

Members on this side will recall that the recession did not start until the fall of 2008. However, in April and May 2008, the government was already in deficit because of its high spending.

• (1605)

That is an important point. The money was spent for gazeboes, steamboats and \$90,000 a day consultants to do the jobs of highly paid, highly skilled civil servants.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, this debate is on Bill C-10. We have now had about four minutes on the state of our economy and what a great job the Liberal government was doing years ago. Could we get this back on track?

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member will be making his point.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, that is very timely. I have finished the part of my speech regarding the context of this legislation, the finances of the country, and where the Conservative government chooses to spend money.

Yesterday, an article in the *Globe and Mail* stated:

Correctional Services Canada's overall budget for the current fiscal year of 2011-12 is projected to be \$514.2-million, or 20.8 per cent, higher than the year before.

It is clearly higher than the minister's estimates.

What do we have after six years of this kind of agenda from the government? We have overcrowded prisons. What is the result? The result is more crime in prisons. Corrections Canada officials who appeared before the government operations committee on which I was sitting last spring told us about the problems caused by double-bunking in their facilities and how it is creating a more dangerous work environment for them. We see this in places like the Dartmouth jail in my province of Nova Scotia. As we have seen in other places, the result of this is more reoffending.

The bills the government has already passed are imposing costs on the provinces as well. That is an important point. They have to build more correctional centres. They are seeing fewer plea bargains because of mandatory minimum sentences. Defence lawyers are not willing to bargain because there is nothing to bargain for. They cannot bargain down a minimum sentence. We are seeing more trials as a result, more backlogs and longer pretrial remands. Most of these costs are falling on the provinces.

For example, there is a section in Bill C-10 that would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. In that part of the bill, 16 minimum mandatory sentences have been created, and the maximum of two years less a day or less is left alone. In other words, that person stays in provincial custody. The cost of these additional sentences and the additional number of people who will be imprisoned is on the province.

Those are the facts. That is important data. However, the government is not interested in that kind of information.

Under this legislation, if a young person at university has a prescription for Tylenol 3 and he or she passes one of those pills to a sick friend, that young person could go to jail for two years.

Where is the evidence to show that shovelling billions of dollars into the prison system would make us safer? Safer streets are mentioned in the bill's title. Therefore, that should be the number one question. Would this legislation make our streets safer? All the evidence indicates no.

The philosopher George Santayana once said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to fulfill it.

Let us look at what has happened elsewhere in the past.

The U.S. is the best example of a place with high incarceration rates. These methods have been tried and have proven to be disastrous there. Its prisons are collapsing under their own weight. The U.S. incarceration rate is now 700% higher per capita than Canada's. Its violent crime rates are far higher than Canada's. For every 100,000 Canadians, Canada has had two murders, whereas the U.S. has had five. For every 100,000 Canadians, Canada has had 89 robberies and the U.S. has had 145.

As my time is running out, I will wind up by urging members to vote against this legislation.

• (1610)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my friend with interest. The members on that side put a lot of stock on the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is fine.

However, a study came out today showing that out of 15 particular cases where the PBO had rendered an opinion, he was right four times. When the Minister of Finance or someone on this side of the House rendered an opinion they were right nine times. They agreed on two of them. I throw that out as an observation.

There was a lot of rhetoric from those members stating that anyone who grows six pot plants would be thrown into jail when in fact that is not what the legislation says. Would the member not admit that who we are really after are the people who grow it to traffic and export it? Would the member at least admit that is actually the intent of the bill?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, first let me speak about the challenges the Parliamentary Budget Officer faces. He was appointed by the government and given the job of reporting to Parliament and advising us as parliamentarians so we can do our constitutional job of voting on spending. However, the government refuses to give that person the tools and information he needs to do his job.

Now government members are complaining that he is not doing a good enough job when they will not give him the information to do it. I think it was Yeltsin who said that he wished he had just one economist instead of 10,000 because they all have different views. Because economists have different views, they will have different outcomes. However, I think we can recognize that when it comes to the cost of the bills the government has been wrong. The numbers show that already. The numbers are out to lunch. They are way over what had been projected.

When it comes to the government's intention, the fact is that members on this side of the House have offered a number of times to fast track the parts of the bill that we agree with. However, there are

other parts that are very problematic and the government fails to recognize that.

• (1615)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of my colleague's speech he spoke about the declining statistical trends in the crime rate. I take the point about the absurdity of this bill in the context of declining crime rates. However, it seems to me too that good policy is good policy and good legislation is good legislation.

I wonder if the member would feel any differently about the contents of this bill were crime rates actually rising.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, it is important to examine the context of what the government is doing in the situation and where it is putting its priorities. The member makes an excellent point as to whether we would feel differently if crime rates were rising. It makes sense to focus on and choose to invest particular attention in this area. We want to see a reduction in crime rates. However, that is happening already.

The question is not so much whether one would use these measures. One could invest in other ways. In fact, the measures in this bill are not well calculated toward reducing crime. In the U.S. it has resulted in an increase in crime and more victims. How do we improve the situation for victims if there are more of them due to more crime and a silly agenda that does not work?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saenich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, earlier the member for Halifax West put a question relating to Peter Blaikie in reference to Maureen Basnicki's gratitude for the bill. As a member of Parliament, I would also vote for the portion of this bill relating to terrorism if it were made separate. I wonder if the member for Halifax West feels the same way. Maureen Basnicki's quote had nothing to do with the question raised.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I do not recall quoting Madam Basnicki. It is not a name that I have read. Perhaps someone else did. I gather the Conservative side quoted her. I would have to review her words to determine whether I would agree. It sounds as though I might, but I would have to look at that.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act

Bill C-10 is a comprehensive bill that brings together reforms proposed from nine bills that were before the previous Parliament. The short title of the bill, the Safe Streets and Communities Act, reflects the overall intent of this comprehensive legislation. It seeks to safeguard Canadians and Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast. This is such a fundamental principle and objective. To my mind, this objective should be unanimously supported by all parliamentarians in all instances and in all cases. While I appreciate there are many issues on which we as lawmakers may reasonably disagree the safety and security of Canadians, including that of vulnerable children, should never be one such issue.

Let us consider this comprehensive bill is. It proposes amendments that generally seek to do the following:

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First, Bill C-10, through part 2, proposes to better protect children and youth from sexual predators. These reforms were previously proposed in former Bill C-54 in the last Parliament, the Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act.

Specifically, these amendments would propose new and higher mandatory minimum penalties to ensure that all sexual offences involving child victims are consistently and strongly condemned. They would create two new offences to target preparatory conduct to the commission of a sexual offence against a child. They would also enable courts to impose conditions on suspected or convicted child sex offenders to prevent them from engaging in conduct that could lead to their committing another sexual offence against a child.

Second, through part 2, Bill C-10 proposes to increase penalties by imposing mandatory minimum penalties when specified aggravated factors are present for serious drug offences. Those offences would be the production, trafficking, possession for the purpose of trafficking, importing and exporting, possession for the purpose of exporting of schedule 1 drugs such as heroine, cocaine, methamphetamine, and schedule 2 drugs such as marijuana.

These offences often involve organized crime, including gang warfare over turf, which in turn brings its own disastrous impact on Canadian communities. They also enable and feed drug abuse, the negative impact of which is not only felt by the addicted individual but also by the family of that addict, as well as by the Canadian health system and the economy.

These reforms were previously proposed and passed by the Senate in former Bill S-10, the Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act.

Third, part 2 of the bill includes what was previously proposed in former Bill C-16, the Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act to end house arrest for serious crimes.

Under these reforms offences carrying a maximum penalty of 14 years, as well as serious offences that are punishable by 10 years or more and prosecuted by indictment, that result in bodily harm, or the import or export, trafficking and production of drugs, or that involve the use of a weapon, or that is specifically identified, would never be eligible to receive a conditional sentence of imprisonment.

Fourth, Bill C-10, through part 4, proposes to protect the public from violent and repeat young offenders. These amendments include: recognizing the protection of society as a principle in the Youth Criminal Justice Act; making it easier to detain youths charged with serious offences pending trial; requiring the courts to consider adult sentences for the most serious and violent cases; and, requiring the police to keep records of extrajudicial measures.

These reforms were previously proposed in former Bill C-4, Sébastien's law and respond to the Supreme Court of Canada 2008 judgment in *Regina v. D.B.*, and the 2006 Nova Scotia report of the Nunn commission of inquiry "Spiralling Out of Control, Lessons Learned From a Boy in Trouble".

Fifth, Bill C-10, through part 3, includes proposals to replace the word "pardons" with "record suspensions". It would expand the period of ineligibility to apply for a record suspension and proposes to make record suspensions unavailable for certain offences,

including child sexual offences, and for persons who have been convicted of more than three offences prosecuted by indictment and for each of which the individual received a sentence of two years or more.

These reforms were previously proposed in former Bill C-23B, the Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act.

Sixth, Bill C-10, also through part 3, proposes to codify some additional key factors in deciding whether a Canadian who has been convicted abroad would be granted a transfer back to Canada. These reforms were previously proposed in former Bill C-5, the Keeping Canadians Safe (International Transfer of Offenders) Act.

● (1620)

Seventh, Bill C-10, through part 3, proposes to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to recognize the rights of victims, increase offender accountability and responsibility, and modernize the disciplinary system for inmates. These proposals were previously proposed in former Bill C-39, the Ending Early Release for Criminals and Increasing Offender Accountability Act.

Eighth, Bill C-10, through part 1, seeks to deter terrorism by supporting victims of terrorism. Specifically, these reforms would enable victims of terrorism to sue perpetrators and supporters of terrorism, including listed foreign states, for loss or damage that is incurred as a result of an act of terrorism committed anywhere in the world on or after January 1, 1985. These amendments were previously proposed and passed by the Senate in former Bill S-7, the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act.

Last, Bill C-10, through part 5, proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to protect vulnerable foreign nationals against abuse and exploitation. These amendments were previously proposed in former Bill C-56, the Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act.

I have briefly summarized the nine core elements of Bill C-10. All of these proposed amendments seek to better protect Canadians. That is something on which we should all be able to agree. Certainly, we know it is something on which Canadians agree. I call on all members to support the bill at second reading so it can be quickly referred to and studied by the justice committee.

● (1625)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I listen to the debate on Bill C-10, I am trying to understand the motivation.

I listened to the member speak and a question came to my mind regarding the protection of potential refugees against the smugglers. Human smuggling already has the highest penalty. The highest punishment is a life sentence. This bill does not increase that. How will this bill punish smugglers who are engaged in human smuggling?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, the bill brings forward a lot of matters. Certainly the human smuggling issue has been troubling this country for a long time. It takes different forms in the exploitation of people smuggled into the country. In many cases it directly affects women who are then forced into the sex trade in Canada. There is a whole raft of issues that certainly dehumanize individuals who are brought here by smugglers. This bill is part of the package to improve the quality of life for people in this country and for those who legitimately come to this country.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, obviously, the government's approach in this bill is similar to its approach if a roof is leaking: it would just put out more buckets. If there is crime in the streets, it will just build more jails. That is the government's approach, rather than trying to fix the roof or trying to address social problems. I certainly think that is a wrong-minded approach.

There are components of this bill that we absolutely agree with and we could support them and unanimously pass them through this House. I am sure they would get support from the NDP as well. Why would the government not allow breaking out from the bill those components that could receive unanimous support?

The contentious aspects, the ones that have not been costed, are the ones that scare the heck out of us. Let us go forward and see a fulsome debate on those particular aspects.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, the very first thing I would say to my good friend from Cape Breton—Canso is that his premise is dead wrong.

We believe that if the roof is leaking, we better fix it. His approach might very well be to analyze each drop of water as it comes through the roof.

With all due respect, this is about protecting Canadians. I do not know why members on the other side want to put a price on protecting victims. I recall talking with a victim of a serious crime. That victim was not concerned about the cost. That victim wanted to see justice.

Justice is not done through an open door. When I listen to members on the other side, their solution is to open the doors of all the prisons and that somehow will fix things. The other problem is they want to blame society for the acts of criminals. Quite frankly, there are criminal acts that should be dealt with.

We should move forward on the bill.

• (1630)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member opposite. It seems to us on this side of the House that the way to get at crime is to find the roots of crime. We should try to stop crime from happening on the ground floor so that the roof the hon. member mentioned does not leak.

Government Orders

Why does the government not want to look at the fundamental roots of crime: poverty, mental illness and addiction?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, quite frankly, part of the member's equation is to blame society. In my involvement in these areas, I have seen families where one child chooses a life of crime and the others do not. It is easy to blame society for these things, but at some point those who commit crimes are going to have to suffer the consequences. Many of them feel they should not suffer those consequences.

We should pass this bill. It is about protecting victims.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, Veterans; the hon. member for Windsor West, Windsor-Detroit Border Crossing; the hon. member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Fisheries and Oceans.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-10, the government's so-called Safe Streets and Communities Act.

Indeed, of the many ways in which the Conservative government is moving Canada backward, few initiatives do more to achieve this than Bill C-10.

In my riding of Davenport over the last two years, this is one of the issues that has come up most often. There is concern over the government's obsession with spending billions of dollars, and by the way, compelling the provinces to do the same, on a crime bill that will largely not make our streets any safer and will not contribute to building stronger communities.

I live in a riding where in the last two years we have seen schools close, recreation centres close, daycare centres close. Programs to help settle new immigrants have been gutted. Bus routes, used primarily by folks doing shift work, have been cut. Senior services are in dire need of new investments. I live in a city where 70,000 people are on a waiting list for affordable housing.

While the essential services that are needed to create strong, vibrant, safe streets and communities are being choked, the government can find billions upon billions of dollars for an experiment on crime prevention which has failed in every jurisdiction where it has been attempted. It utterly failed, as we know, in the United States.

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Members should not get me wrong. It is not that people in my riding are not concerned about crime. They are concerned about crime. Indeed they are, but I am reminded of a conversation I had with some residents who were concerned about drug dealers taking over the local park. I am concerned about that too. It was not that they were just concerned about the dealers. To a person, these residents complained not so much that there are not enough prisons to lock the dealers up, but that there are not enough programs for young people to get involved in. With nothing to do and few local job prospects, young people are vulnerable to falling into gang culture and criminal elements. Bill C-10 does not address this fundamental foundational issue around crime prevention.

While I listed all the closures in my riding, and I could list more, there are things that are being built and opened in my riding. In the riding of Davenport there are two brand new police stations being built as we speak. Many are hopeful, as am I, that these new police stations in our neighbourhoods will help with some of the crime issues that people are dealing with, but the problem underlined in my riding is writ large in Bill C-10: there is no balance.

In communities across the country investment in social infrastructure is desperately needed, yet we are told that we are heading into a period of austerity and that there is no money. Well, there is money for some things, but when ideology trumps common sense, we get nasty pieces of legislation like Bill C-10.

Instead of a national affordable housing strategy that would provide a framework to provide stable affordable housing, a key determinant to health and a primary building block for safe communities, the government will spend over \$500 million this year alone on new prison construction. That is the housing strategy for Canada.

While the government squeezes middle and working class families and small businesses, it is happy to spend over \$162,000 on average annually for each new prison cell in this country, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Instead of investing in getting at the roots of poverty, mental illness and addiction, instead of focusing on a comprehensive pan-Canadian job strategy—and rolling over for the oil and gas industry—is not a cross-Canada jobs program—the government wants to spend close to \$3 billion a year locking up more people, providing fewer programs to rehabilitate them, all the while draining our public coffers, our precious resources, that could truly create safer streets. Indeed, prison costs are up 86% since the Conservatives took power while the crime rate continues to fall to its lowest level since the 1970s.

● (1635)

The government has racked up the biggest fiscal deficit in the history of Canada. Instead of being smart with taxpayer money, it plays politics and lets its dated right-wing ideology continue to craft bad public policy.

For example, a single new low security cell is going to cost \$260,000 to build. A medium security cell is going to cost \$400,000. A maximum security cell is going to cost \$600,000. For goodness sake, even the annual cost of an inmate in a community correctional centre is now over \$85,000 a year. Does this make fiscal sense?

As the income gap gets wider and wider in our country, the government hectors Canadians about belt-tightening, while it spends and spends on a prison expansion scheme about which both the Canadian Bar Association and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, among many others, have serious concerns.

The government does not actually want to hear what Canadians think about this omnibus bill. If it did, it would not have limited debate on the bill. Bill C-10 packages up nine government bills from the previous Parliament and presents them to the House and to Canadians as one whopping bill. Then it says that it wants us to accept it all without any conversation or debate.

With the motion that passed yesterday morning, Canadians in the House will only be able to debate for a period of less than two hours for each of the nine bills. For a government that was elected to bring more transparency and more accountability to this place, it is in fact bringing less. The action of limiting debate on this huge and outrageously expensive bill is one more example of its lack of transparency.

It is too bad. Canadians deserve to have Bill C-10 aired to its fullest. Experts say that mandatory minimum sentences do not work for reducing drug use, tackling organized crime or making our communities safer. The measures contained in the bill, for example, will not make it easier for law enforcement agencies to get to the organized crime bosses who run the drug trade, who we need to bring in and incarcerate.

One of the most effective ways to promote public safety is the successful rehabilitation and reintegration back into society of offenders. Our federal prison system lacks the programs to deal with this effectively. This legislation does not deal with this issue in any kind of real way.

We do not oppose everything in the bill. As we saw yesterday in the House, my hon. colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh tabled a motion that would have expedited the passing of elements of the bill that were in the last Parliament, known as Bill C-54. This section seeks to protect children from exploitation and sexual abuse. In fact, the government has adopted measures in this section of Bill C-10 put forward by the NDP in private member's bills.

It is too bad that the government would rather play politics than move quickly on parts of the bill that could get unanimous support in this House, like those measures to protect our children. In fact, immediately after voting down the motion that would have sent that part of the bill to the Senate within 48 hours, government members proceeded with statements on the importance of the very measure they had just voted against putting on the fast track.

As I said, there are things in the bill which we do agree with and which we could find common ground with the government on, but it is not really interested in doing that. The government's decision to limit debate heaps a measure of ideological cynicism on to what should be a very thorough, serious examination.

The bill is too costly and it will not make our streets and communities safer. We on the NDP side of the House have come prepared to work with the government to quickly pass the measures that will protect children and to fix measures that will not work. It is too bad the government wants to play politics and games with the safety of some of the most vulnerable in our society.

• (1640)

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague very carefully. This is what I heard in Calgary Northeast. I directly asked a couple of offenders who had been in jail a couple of times, for a few months each time, one specific question. When I asked them if they had to spend a minimum of two years in jail for the same offence instead of only two months, they both said that they would not have done it. That is the deterrence.

The member talked about the costs and about the debate. First, these bills have been debated in the House extensively in the past. It is so unfortunate that I have not heard a line about supporting the victims.

Why can those members not stop playing politics and do the right thing by standing up for the victims, supporting the bill and making a change for once?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Madam Speaker, the fact is that 77,000 fewer crimes were reported in 2010 than in 2009. The 2010 crime rates are the lowest since the 1970s, yet the cost of prisons are up 86% since the conservative government took over. This is the new math of this Parliament. Canadians are scratching their heads. We wonder why the government seeks to spend money in such a fashion without fulsome debate in the House on the bill before us.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's prisons are home to an increasing number of offenders with mental health disorders, ranging from anti-social personality disorder through to schizophrenia, and offenders who may also be addicted to alcohol or drugs. We are seeing criminalization of the mentally ill.

A recent report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator shows that the number of people in federal prisons with mental illnesses has nearly doubled in the past decade, while the incarceration rate has barely budged.

What solutions would the hon. member suggest to treat people with mental illness who run into difficulty with the law, often because of a lack of a national mental health strategy and poorly-funded, disorganized and fragmented community mental health services?

• (1645)

Mr. Andrew Cash: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question and it is true. Law enforcement agencies across Canada have been saying for years that they need the resources to properly deal with the issue of mental health. We see this time and time again, anecdotally across Canada, that when law enforcement have that training, many situations that previously resulted in tragic outcomes now do not.

It is incumbent on us to provide law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to learn more about mental health, to understand

the issue and to understand that this is an illness and not criminal behaviour.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a father, it is completely unacceptable to me to watch a government that claims to be responsible hide behind pedophilia to say that some aspects of the bill are commendable and that we do not want to support it. That does not work.

Is it acceptable to hide behind one item in order to try to get others passed in such an irresponsible manner?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Madam Speaker, in fact, this is one of the problems we have with the bill. It is a cynical move on the part of the government to hide the problematic parts of the bill inside an omnibus bill so we cannot, as parliamentarians, as representatives of the Canadian public, properly debate them. We all think this is a very serious problem.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Madam Speaker, I come from northern Alberta, a very beautiful part of Canada with lush wilderness and five rivers flowing into my community. It is a beautiful place. I have lived there 45 years. During that time I have seen a move from 1,500 people to approximately 100,000 today. That is quite a growth for any community, but during that period of time I also had the opportunity to practise law. I practised several different types of law, including criminal law.

My family has lived in that community in the centre of town for 45 years and during that time period we have seen a tremendous growth in one particular trade. That trade is obvious and seen daily on the streets of downtown Fort McMurray as the drug trade.

I get many calls from constituents in relation to this activity, which carries on during the day. That is why I am so pleased today to rise to speak in support of Bill C-10, which would help those beautiful communities across Canada that have turned into places where drugs are sold openly in public at all times of the day.

This must stop. This is Canada. This is not some third world country. This is Canada where we believe in the rule of law, where we believe in obeying the laws. I am glad to say that Bill C-10 is not just in relation to punishing drug dealers, but also to protect our youth, to protect our country and enact the justice for victims of terrorism act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and other acts. We are getting a lot of work done here notwithstanding the NDP's position on the bill.

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I have received tremendous support, not just from Fort McMurray but from small communities like Slave Lake and High Prairie, which are nestled in a different area of Alberta about five hours by vehicle further south. However, these communities have seen a tremendous increase in plain and obvious drug trafficking as well. They have spoken loudly and clearly that they want this off their streets.

The bill, the safe streets and communities act, responds to and reflects our commitment to reintroduce our law and order agenda legislation to combat crime and terrorism. We hear members on the other side say that we should study it some more. We have studied it and many of the positions that are found in these bills have been Conservative Party policy for many years. They have been thoroughly debated in the House before. Maybe some of the members are new, we understand that, but they have been debated. The people of Canada spoke in the last election. They gave us a clear mandate to move forward with this agenda because they knew that the Liberal Party, which is now pretty much gone except for a few members, had blocked our agenda.

I can hear those members over there talking about standing up—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1650)

The Deputy Speaker: I ask members who do not have the floor to wait until questions and comments.

Mr. Brian Jean: Thank you, Madam Speaker, just like the Conservatives stand up for victims, you are standing up for me and I appreciate that.

As noted by the Minister of Justice in his speech to the House last week, this bill reflects the strong mandate that Canadians have given us to protect society and ultimately hold criminals responsible for their actions. That does not mean a slap on the wrist. It means time away for the crimes they have committed, proportional, of course, to the crimes they have committed.

Bringing these nine bills together, that died on the order paper in the last Parliament, sends a clear signal to Canadians that we have listened to them, that we are following the mandate they have given us, and we are following through with our commitment. Canadians know that they can count on this government to do exactly that.

We have, through a series of bills and legislative moves, sought to improve public safety and strengthen our justice system since we formed government in 2006. While we have enacted significant criminal law reforms, there is much more to be done. Moving forward on this particular piece of legislation will certainly be a step in the right direction.

However, our work is not done and we look forward to constructive criticism from the opposition. We are sure it will be constructive and we know there will be criticism, but we look for suggestions from them because nothing is perfect. We know that we have to go further to better reflect what Canadians want. That is clearly safety on their streets, to take drug dealers off the streets, and ensure their children can play on the streets.

The suggestion by the opposition that we should somehow cherry pick parts of the bill and fast-track them is not listening to what Canadians said in the last election. They clearly support our law and

order agenda, and the NDP and Liberals should get on board and do exactly that, not just with this bill, as I know the Liberals have said they will support some parts of it, but other bills because clearly Canadians should be the final boss of this place and of us.

As I said, this debate is welcome because we have an opportunity to put in the forefront what we are trying to do for Canadians and that we are listening to them. It is also important to recognize that we have continued this debate time and time again with many of the same people across the way now complaining that we are not having proper discussion.

Clearly, we know that moving forward with this bill would ensure public safety. It would ensure offenders are held more accountable. There are minimum sentences to ensure that happens and so that judges have clear knowledge. I remember when I practised law that I would stand before judges who would say they did not have a clear indication from Parliament here or there, that they did not know which sentence to give, that an offender in a certain case went away for two years and in another case an offender got two months for the same offence, maybe drug trafficking in Vancouver versus Edmonton. That happens. I can assure everyone that happens.

This sends a clear message to judges that the minimal sentences we are passing, with the help of the Liberals, hopefully, and convincing some NDP members about what Canadians want, will actually happen. We are sending clear direction to judges across this country. We want to see this stopped. Judges have asked for direction and I hope they are listening today. They should recognize that Canadians speak to us by electing us and we speak to them through putting laws in place that judges will interpret. Judges will impose the sentences we ask them to because Canadians have clearly told us they want that.

I have heard a good overview of Bill C-10 by many members in the House. I know many have complained it is a bit too large and complicated. I have had an opportunity to sit in on special legislative committees, passing 15 bills in this place through committees, and I do not see any complication. It is plain language and is very clear. It has been before the House in some cases for years and years.

I would suggest it is not too large nor complex. However, if members on the other side have difficulties with particular clauses, I would be happy to go through them with them. I am sure many members in this place, at least on the Conservative side, would be happy to sit down and explain some of the more complex details. Clearly, we have to listen to Canadians and pass these laws, and I am looking for support from the opposition side to do exactly that.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find the government member's comments to the effect that new members may not be familiar with this omnibus bill somewhat condescending. On the contrary, we are very familiar with it; we are informed. We know that bills of this nature have been introduced in the past, although certain provisions were a little different and several minimum sentences have been added.

Accordingly, when we talk about offender accountability and responsibility regarding drugs, can the member across the floor explain to us on what basis they can say that measures are in place to help offenders? We know that only one in five offenders receives any help in terms of mental health and rehabilitation, and that few of these people get any meaningful help.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question regarding provincial jurisdiction.

I have seen in this place some constructive work by Liberal, Bloc and NDP members on some of our legislation. I can assure the member that we do not believe that this is perfect legislation. It is large and it has been around for a while, but it is not perfect. That is why there have been some changes over the summer. We would ask for her input, and the input of all members, to make it even more perfect. If they see places where we should impose minimum sentences or increase sentences for particularly violent offences or offences against children, I would suggest that the Minister of Justice would be more than happy to have that input and implement those changes.

If the member does have that, please come across and explain exactly why the punishment is not severe enough; how we could utilize it to rehabilitate or actually change the justice system; and, as to what has happened in this country over the last 20 or 30 years, how to make the streets safer for Canadians and respond better to what they want.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and I am delighted to know that he has practised criminal law. He would likely know that jurisdictions around the world, including jurisdictions here in North America, our own federal government and five provincial governments, are seeking ways to relieve congestion and delay in our court systems.

One of my many concerns about the bill is that it is, in fact, going to overwhelm our court system. It would do quite the opposite of its purported intention, which is to provide justice for victims and safer communities.

I wonder if the member could advise us as to what the bill does, or what the government is prepared to do, to relieve congestion and delays in our provincial and federal court systems.

Mr. Brian Jean: Madam Speaker, the member is correct. It is a concern of mine as well having practised law in Fort McMurray, and it was a very busy criminal practice.

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I would note some other statistics. I do not have them in front of me, but from memory I think only 6% to 8% of crimes are actually solved in this country. I also understand that somewhere around 70% or 80% of the offences committed in this country are done by someone who has committed them before and has been in jail before. These are startling and troubling statistics.

I have represented people who had 10 or 12 previous impaired driving convictions and those with four or five assaults. There were some people who had three or four pages to their record, which does not mean four or five assaults but probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30 or 40 previous convictions, and it is difficult to get the convictions.

We clearly need to send a message, but to save a dime, the cost to taxpayers, the cost to the citizens of Canada, for not making sure people pay for the crimes they commit I would suggest far outweighs the opposite.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Madam Speaker, when the Minister of Justice told us that he would not govern on the basis of the most recent statistics, he was basically saying that he would not use facts or evidence to guide his decisions. That is very worrisome.

Are we going to be subject to governance without logic or reason for the next four years? Should we also expect the Conservative government to rule by fiat without recognizing that 61% of Canadians did not vote for them? The day after the May 2 election, when the Conservatives had only 39% of the votes, the Prime Minister admitted that the results of the election showed that Canadians wanted the parties to work together. Was this a false promise? I think that the whole government and, more specifically, all members of Parliament who are paid by taxpayers and represent the people in their ridings, have the duty to govern in a reasonable and thoughtful manner.

When the government stubbornly insists on passing a bill when it does not know the actual costs of that bill but does know that certain extremely costly measures will not address the actual problems and, worse, could very well create more problems, it is not logical, responsible or thoughtful. I would even go so far as to say that the government is acting in bad faith.

I find it hard to believe that all the Conservative members agree that the government should put the provinces further in debt when they do not have the slightest bit of evidence that the proposed measures will actually make our streets and communities safer. In fact, by taking just 15 minutes to read the news or the press releases issued by experts such as the Canadian Bar Association, we quickly learn that minimum sentences do not reduce crime rates; this could save us \$90,000 a day. Minimum sentencing does not work and costs a fortune.

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The government needs to tell taxpayers the truth by revealing the costs and by explaining the basis for its proposals, particularly those related to minimum sentencing. The government needs to ask taxpayers directly whether they would like it to pass a bill of unknown costs that threatens health and education or whether they would rather the government take the time to ensure that their money is invested responsibly and adopt measures that would truly make their streets and communities safer. Clearly, Canadians would choose the second option.

We all agree, even the members of the opposition, that criminals must be punished. I do not want to dwell too long on what has already been said, but there are measures that we are prepared to support right now, namely, all those related to violent crimes and sexual offences against children.

However, the government seems to forget that 95% of prisoners will eventually be released and that the correctional system is a dangerous environment, rife with drug trafficking and violence, which can lead to other kinds of crimes. Thus, it is possible that increasing the number of prisoners and taxing the prison system even further, without investing more judiciously in preventive measures that tackle the source of the problem, could have very negative, or even dangerous, consequences.

If the purpose of Bill C-10 really is to make our streets and communities safer, why does it not include more investment in rehabilitation and prevention programs? I know the government does not like statistics, but 80% of incarcerated women are in prison for crimes related to poverty, including 39% for unpaid fines. These figures released this morning by the National Council of Welfare point to a real problem. The council also noted that the cost to incarcerate a woman who fails to pay a \$150 fine is \$1,400.

I am sure the Minister of Finance will be pleased to hear—and free of charge too—that for every dollar invested in prevention and rehabilitation, the government would save far more in incarceration costs, addiction costs and the cost of crimes committed in prisons themselves. Front-line workers such as social workers, street outreach workers, school psychologists and counsellors are looking for an opportunity to become more involved on the ground to prevent crime by targeting at-risk groups—young people in distress, people with mental illness or substance abuse problems, and marginalized people. Their work allows would-be offenders to get help and referrals to the services they need. All studies and examples from elsewhere demonstrate that prevention is more effective than incarceration and punishment.

Prevention not only stops the crimes from being committed, but also contributes to the well-being of Canadian society. Therefore, fewer crimes mean fewer victims and less incarceration. Is that not a nicer social and economic picture? It appears that we are not all on the same page.

• (1705)

As members of Parliament, we are all paid to make difficult decisions, but we are also paid to make logical decisions and to undertake the necessary research to ensure that taxpayers' money is not being wasted but is being spent effectively.

Why is the government so anxious to pass a bill that includes measures that have failed in other countries?

With a government that so often takes a page from the United States government when developing new policies, it should learn from one of the United States' concrete examples, which shows that minimum sentences do not decrease drug trafficking crimes. Not only that, minimum sentences are expensive and can exacerbate a large number of issues such as overcrowded prisons and negative effects of repression on society.

Logic tells me that if the Conservatives truly want to improve public safety—and I have no doubt that that is what they want, as do the rest of us—why not ensure that the proposed measures truly target the root of the problem?

To do that, we simply need more time to do the necessary research and base the measures on facts, on concrete examples from other countries and on responsible reasoning.

With this very uncertain economic climate, it is not the time to act like reckless cowboys and pass laws with unknown price tags, which could be detrimental to the economic health of the country and the provinces, as well as public safety.

To justify the bill and evade our questions, the Minister of Justice, who says he does not rely on figures and statistics, often cites the price paid by victims, which runs to \$99 billion. I hope that this is not an arbitrary amount.

But where is the evidence that this cost will decrease with implementation of this legislation? Taxpayers deserve answers. If there is clear and objective evidence that minimum sentences do not reduce drug-related crimes in the U.S., how will they lead to a reduction in the price paid by victims?

Why not vote for measures that are unanimously accepted in the House, continue a healthy and democratic debate on the contentious issues and find the right, intelligent and effective solutions to ensure the safety of Canadians?

And above all, why not show Canadians that the Conservatives are prepared to work with the opposition parties, which represent 61% of the population, and make considered decisions by splitting the bill and debating the laws one by one?

I can confirm—and this is more free advice—that the majority of Canadians will be pleased to see that the government is prepared to make good decisions and consult experts rather than hastily proposing repressive laws with unknown social, economic and legal consequences. This would bode well for the next four years.

Therefore, I do not support passage of this amalgamation of repressive and unjustified bills in Bill C-10. I invite the Conservatives to review this bill and allow a debate that is healthier and more democratic for everyone.

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is important to understand that the member who just spoke is quite new to this place and maybe does not know what has happened with this legislation in past years. Some parts of it have been debated in the House for many years. If she had looked at the record, she would have seen that there were actually 51 days of debate on this legislation in the Canadian Parliament. There has already been 85 hours of debate and 223 speeches on this legislation. The bill was in committee for 58 days, or 123 hours and it heard from 295 witnesses.

Maybe the member did not know that because, if she had, she would not be complaining that we grouped this legislation and are trying to get it through before Christmas. The member needs to look at what happened before in terms of debate.

If the member had been in the House longer, she would have known that getting unanimous support in this place is virtually impossible, rarely happens and, when it does, it is on a very narrow issue. It is simply not realistic.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, I realize that there have been lengthy debates on a number of the bills included in Bill C-10, which is an omnibus bill. However, with all due respect to the member opposite, a number of provisions have been added, particularly those regarding minimum sentences, to which we are opposed given that a number of studies show that such sentences are ineffective in preventing crime. In fact, we are in favour of more prevention.

Earlier we were asked to make some suggestions for improving the bills. All we have been doing for the past few days is suggesting preventive measures, more help to prevent crimes from being committed and positive and effective help for people with mental health problems, the disadvantaged, the poor and those coping with unemployment and housing problems.

Those are all proposals we have made, but it seems that half the people in this room have a mental block and are not listening. Many things have been proposed. Just because we are new MPs or young, that does not mean we are not informed. We are here in good faith. We read the documents and try to find common ground. If we fundamentally disagree with the values being proposed to us, then we will obviously take an opposing stand and ask the other side to make changes.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked a lot about prevention. I will share a story with her about some of the beautiful children with whom I have worked. They can be verbally and physically aggressive. They find it difficult to understand what people are saying to them. They have problems managing their money. It is all through no fault of their own. They are victims of fetal alcohol syndrome disorder.

As members know, exposure to too much alcohol can damage a developing baby's brain. The resulting symptoms including learning difficulties, problems processing information, poor judgment and a

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lack of emotional control. Many of these victims end up in difficulty with the law.

I wonder what the member thinks Canada should be doing for these children, these adults, and to address FAS in prisons.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member from the Liberal Party for her question. We have a lot in common. I used to work in the school system as a teacher.

Many children are pleased to get help at school, whether it comes from social workers or remedial teachers. With that help, they can finally manage, after several treatments, to control their anger, express in a non-violent manner what they are feeling and discuss the problems they are experiencing. They end up working through their problems in a more positive way.

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased this afternoon to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

We all know that the safe streets and communities act proposes a wide range of reforms to strengthen the law's response to several things: child sexual abuse and exploitation, serious drug and violent property crimes, terrorism, violent young offenders, offender accountability and management, and the protection of vulnerable foreign workers against abuse and exploitation.

As many hon. members have noted, the bill brings together in one comprehensive package reforms that were included in nine bills that were put before the previous Parliament and that died on the order paper with the dissolution of Parliament for the general election.

I will itemize these. These former bills are: Bill C-4, Sébastien's Law (Protecting the Public from Violent Young Offenders); Bill C-5, Keeping Canadians Safe (International Transfer of Offenders) Act; Bill C-16, Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act; Bill C-23B, Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act; Bill C-39, Ending Early Release for Criminals and Increasing Offender Accountability Act; Bill C-54, Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act; Bill C-56, Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act; Bill C-59, Abolition of Early Parole Act; Bill S-7, Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act; and finally Bill S-10, Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act.

Government Orders

Many hon. members have participated in several hours of debate today and ongoing debate from the last Parliament to now. It is clear that some do not share the same views as the government about the need to address crime in our society, the need to increase public safety, the need to better balance the role of victims in the justice system and the need to make offenders more accountable.

My remarks here today need not repeat what some of my hon. colleagues have already noted about the key features of Bill C-10 and the importance of these reforms. I propose to briefly comment on the important reforms proposed in Bill C-10 as they relate to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act came into effect in April 2003. The reforms now proposed in Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act, have been shaped by consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. After five years of experience with the Youth Criminal Justice Act, a review was launched by the Minister of Justice in 2008. This began with discussions with provincial and territorial attorneys general to identify the issues that they considered most important.

In May 2008, the Minister of Justice began a series of cross-country round tables, often co-chaired by provincial and territorial ministers, in order to hear from youth justice professionals, front-line youth justice stakeholders and others about areas of concern and possible improvements regarding the provisions and principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Input from individuals and organizations was also provided through the Department of Justice website, in letters and in in-person meetings. The results showed clearly that most provinces, territories and stakeholders believe the current youth legislation works well in dealing with the majority of youth who commit crimes. However, there were concerns about the small number of youth who commit serious, violent offences or who are repeat offenders who may need a more focused approach to ensure the public is protected.

Clearly, the message was to build upon the good foundation of the law and make much needed improvements and the reforms proposed in Bill C-10 reflect this. Although the Youth Criminal Justice Act is working well for most youth, particular elements of the act need to be strengthened to ensure that youth who commit serious, violent or repeat offences are held accountable with sentences and other measures that are proportionate to the severity of the crime and the degree of the responsibility of the offender.

There have been concerns voiced from many sources and this government has responded. The reforms included in Bill C-10, previously included in Bill C-4, known as Sébastien's law, would enhance our fair and effective youth justice system and result in a system that holds youth accountable for their criminal misconduct and promotes their rehabilitation and re-integration into society in order to promote the protection of the public.

• (1720)

In addressing amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, it is important to note that the act's preamble specifically references that Canada is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Youth Criminal Justice Act also recognizes that young persons have rights and freedoms, including those stated in

the charter and the Canadian Bill of Rights. Nothing in Bill C-10 will impair these rights of young persons.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act provides for a range of responses that relate to the seriousness of the crime. These sentences also address the needs and circumstances of the youth and promote rehabilitation.

Amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act will ensure that young people under 18 who are serving a custody sentence will serve it in a youth custody facility. It will no longer be possible to put young people in adult prisons or penitentiaries, where the correctional regime is more suited to adults and where young people could all too easily become vulnerable to older, more hardened criminals. It is in the interests of the protection of society that young people become rehabilitated, and this amendment is aimed to ensure that this takes place.

While a sound legislative base is an essential part of ensuring that Canada has a fair and effective youth justice system, it is also essential to address the conditions that underlie criminal behaviour if we are to achieve any long-term or meaningful solution to the problem. Conditions such as addiction, difficult childhoods, mental health, fetal alcohol syndrome, or longer-term marginalization will continue to pose challenges to solving the problems of youth offending.

Our government has implemented various programs to assist in addressing these issues. The national anti-drug strategy has a significant youth focus. On the prevention front, the government has launched a national public awareness program and campaign to discourage our youth from using illicit drugs. The government has made funding available under the youth justice fund for pilot treatment programs that will assist with the rehabilitation of youth who have drug problems and are in the justice system, and for programs that are working toward preventing youth from becoming involved with guns, gangs and drugs.

Partnering with health, education, employment and other service providers beyond the traditional system, we can all work together. For example, through the youth justice fund the Department of Justice provided funding to a pilot program called Career Path, which offers a comprehensive specialized service for youth in the justice system who are at risk or are involved in gang activities. The program offers youth educational training and employment opportunities by connecting them with an employer who will also act as a mentor to facilitate making smart choices, foster pro-social attitudes, build leadership skills and gain valuable employability skills as a viable option to gang membership.

The reforms to the Youth Criminal Justice Act are essential and responsive and should be supported as a key part of a broader effort on the part of the government to prevent and respond to youth involved in the justice system.

I would like to bring it a little closer to home, if I may.

This is the story of Ann Tavares, of London, who suffered a huge loss in November of 2004 when Stephan Lee stabbed her son 28 times. Steven Tavares was an innocent victim who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. His death irreparably scarred the lives of those who loved him forever. That loss is what happened.

To compound her tragedy, her son's killer was found not criminally responsible due to mental disorder and sent to an Alberta hospital the following year. He was conditionally released in May 2008 and is now living in Alberta. All of this happened without notification to the victim's family or the public at large.

Suffering such a loss might have destroyed an individual. However, this became an impetus for Ann's quest to make others aware of what happened to her son and the lack of justice for this heinous crime. She has lobbied tirelessly against the inequities of the system, a system the government is trying to fix.

Ann strongly felt that there needs to be a connection between mental illness and crime. Specifically, she felt that the insanity defence needs to be banned. She felt that to say a perpetrator is not criminally responsible is too subjective. Mental impairment is a defence that anyone can claim. If someone commits a crime, that person should be punished.

She believes mental illness should not absolve someone from the crime they committed. The punishment needs to be based on the severity of the crime, and a fixed minimum time needs to be served before they are put back into the community. However, Ann did want good to come of her tragic situation. In addition to the punishment, she felt that the perpetrator should get mental health treatment, and that to protect innocent victims like her son and the community at large, such criminals should not be released into the community until they have been certified as not a risk to others.

I would like to expand on that through the questions and answers, if I might, Madam Speaker.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

I met with workers from the Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines penitentiary, which is in my riding. They told me that sending more people to prison will make their jobs more difficult and more dangerous. I would like to know what my colleague has to say about how this bill would affect these workers. I would also like to know what the government is going to do for them.

[English]

Mr. Ed Holder: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague's question is thoughtful and fair. At the same time, I think we need to always recall that this is about protecting the victims in society and I want to honour the guards and administrators in our system who are responsible for ensuring that those people who need to be kept away

from the general public are in fact kept away. I think they do an excellent job in my colleague's riding and in all ridings across this country, and I would like to salute them.

I would like to bring this a bit closer to home. I am very concerned about issues relating crime and the things we can do on behalf of youth. One of the things I do is a polling question every week. I send it to some 15,000 people as my question of the week. It is from people right across my community, but particularly in the great riding of London West. I would like to provide some responses in the hope they will give some clarity to why Bill C-10 is so important. I know we all care in this House, but this is critical.

When London West residents were asked if publishing the names of young offenders publicly after criminal conviction would hurt their chances of rehabilitation, 65% said it would not.

When my constituents were asked online if those convicted of sex-related crimes, including pedophilia, should be eligible to apply to have their criminal records pardoned, 95% responded "no".

This was the final question: when I asked my constituents if opposition parties should support the Conservative government's efforts to limit the ability of serious criminals and sex offenders to obtain a pardon, 94% said "no".

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question relates to the intended or unintended consequences on the budgets of provincial jurisdictions. My colleague would know full well that his government supports money for police and for prisons, but between police and prisons there is a system under stress. Much of that system under stress is paid for by the provinces. I am referring to the prosecutors and the places in provincial institutions, which are presently full. I realize that the bulk of his speech focused on youth criminal justice; this applies both to youth criminal justice and to adults.

I would ask for his comments on what measures are going to be put in place to allow the provinces to tackle this financial burden that is being downloaded to them as a result of this legislation.

Mr. Ed Holder: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question and I think the member will be very pleased with the answer.

He may not be aware, but I certainly want to let all colleagues in the House and all Canadians know that in this past year this government put \$2.4 billion back into the system to ensure that we could provide the kind of protection and support that our provinces need. I am pleased to say we have done that.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member, but he made reference to one aspect of the bill. I think we need to recognize that the government is bringing forward a bill that is a series of bills that should have been bills on their own. As a result of doing that, the Conservatives have further complicated the matter by saying that we now have a limited amount of time to debate a bill that encompasses many other bills.

Would he not agree that what Conservatives are really doing is a disservice, and is disrespectful to the proceedings of the House in not allowing members to deal with bills on an individual basis? In essence—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I must give the hon. member 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Ed Horder: Madam Chair, it is rather interesting that when all these bills were put forward to this House, our colleagues opposite had the opportunity to support them on an individual basis and chose not to, so I find it very curious that now, when we try to pull it together as one comprehensive bill, the member takes a separate view.

My Cape Breton mom once said about politicians, “After it's all said and done, there's a lot more said than done”.

It is now going to stop.

● (1730)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to join the debate on Bill C-10, the safe streets and communities act. I have been very glad to see the vigorous debate that has taken place in this House over the past few days and, of course, over 79 hours of debate in the previous Parliament.

As we know, the safe streets and communities act is a piece of comprehensive legislation, a piece of comprehensive legislation that is made up of nine separate bills. I have heard my hon. colleagues from the opposition question the rationale of bundling this important piece of legislation together, so I would like to speak to that point.

Since taking office, our government has made no secret of the fact that we will stand up for the safety and security of Canadian families. We have been clear that we will ensure that victims are heard and that victims are respected. We have been clear that dangerous criminals belong behind bars and not in the streets, where they can harm law-abiding Canadians.

The safe streets and communities act, and every piece of legislation within it, is about fulfilling those commitments to Canadians.

This is not the first piece of comprehensive legislation that our government has introduced. We were proud to have delivered the Tackling Violent Crime Act back in 2008, an act that has now been law for some period of time.

Members will recall that the Tackling Violent Crime Act strengthened the Criminal Code in a number of ways. It delivered tougher mandatory jail time for serious gun crimes; it established new bail provisions, which require those accused of serious gun

crimes to show why they should not be kept in jail while they are waiting for trial; it protected youth from adult sexual predators by increasing the age of protection from 14 to 16 years of age; and it ensured more effective sentencing and monitoring to prevent dangerous, high-risk offenders from offending again and again and again. It also made new ways to detect and investigate drug-impaired driving, as well as stronger penalties for impaired driving.

Much like the safe streets and communities act, all of the provisions had been pieces of previous legislation that had been blocked in political games by the oppositions prior to 2008. However, our party and our government believed so strongly in this action that we did what was in the best interests of Canadians: we bundled them into a comprehensive package known as the Tackling Violent Crime Act. On top of that, we made that act an issue of confidence in this House.

Now we find ourselves, after the May 2 general election, in a similar position with Bill C-10, the safe streets and communities act.

As we know, this past spring Canadians gave us a strong mandate to move forward with our law and order agenda. As part of the Conservative election platform, we made a commitment to move quickly to reintroduce legislation that had been blocked or opposed by the opposition.

It has always been a point of pride that this government delivers on the promises we make to Canadians. That is why we have done as we have promised and why we are here today debating the safe streets and communities act.

Now I would like to talk a bit about the principle of protection of society.

What exactly does that mean? In short, it means that when courts and government officials are making decisions, the first thing they would now consider is how those decisions would affect the greater society.

It may come as a surprise to many Canadians that when it comes to the transfer of offenders, the protection of society is not currently the principle of consideration. We are currently in a situation in which the Minister of Public Safety is compelled to look at a number of factors when considering whether a prisoner should be transferred back to Canada. In fact, currently, the minister is restricted in the considerations that can be taken into account when he is looking to transfer offenders.

Bill C-10 would change that. This bill provides additional factors that the Minister of Public Safety may consider when determining whether to grant an offender's request to serve his or her sentence back in Canada. In doing so, it clarifies one of the key purposes of the International Transfer of Offenders Act, which that is to protect the safety of all Canadians. This would ensure that Canadians and their families are safe and secure in their communities and that offenders are held accountable for their actions. Canadian families expect no less.

Let me give members a few additional examples of what the minister could consider when considering whether an offender should be transferred back to Canada.

As examples, he could consider whether the offender is likely to endanger public safety, he could consider whether the offender is going to keep engaging in criminal activities, and he could consider whether the criminal would endanger the safety of Canadian children.

• (1735)

This legislation would also allow the minister to consider, among other things, whether the offender was co-operating with rehabilitation and local law enforcement, and whether the offender accepted responsibility for his or her actions. This means that when a minister makes a decision as to whether an offender is transferred back to Canada, he or she has the ability to look at a broad range of factors that go beyond what is simply in the best interests of the offender to ensure that protection of Canadian society comes first.

These proposed changes to the International Transfer of Offenders Act are among important changes contained within the Safe Streets and Communities Act. Others include better protection for our children and youth from sexual predators, increasing penalties for organized drug crime, and preventing serious criminals from serving their sentences in the comfort of their own living rooms by ending house arrest for serious crimes. It also would protect the public from violent young offenders and would eliminate pardons for serious crimes. It would increase offender accountability. It would support the victims of crime and would protect vulnerable foreign nationals from abuse and exploitation.

These are all measures in which our government strongly believes. We promised Canadians we would bring them forward swiftly after the election. That is why we have introduced the Safe Streets and Communities Act. It is also why we are hopeful that members of the opposition will do the right thing and support this important legislation.

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member addressed the part of the bill that deals with the international transfer of prisoners. However, I know that the international community, particularly the United States, has spoken out against these measures since they give the minister too much power to determine whether a prisoner can be transferred. I would like the hon. member to comment on the international community's reaction in this regard.

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, we can always listen to people across the world who comment on the laws and legislation we pass here in Canada, but the member might have noticed today that Canada was selected as the top nation in the world. People have a positive feeling about our country.

We can listen to what people around the world say, or we can listen to the victims of crime in this country. That is whom our government listens to. We are going to stand and fight to protect the families of this country.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States Supreme Court has declared that overcrowding in United States prisons to the extent of 137% results in conditions within the prisons that are cruel and unusual punishment. The overcrowding rate in prisons in British Columbia is now at 200%. This legislation

is going to pack provincial institutions to a greater degree. Undoubtedly there are going to be charter challenges.

What measures does the government plan to take to deal with overcrowding in provincial institutions as a result of bringing in this law?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that our government is investing in the expansion of federal prisons. We are also supporting our provinces with investments in their justice systems. No previous government in this country has done as much to invest and support the provinces in the area of justice as the Conservative Party of Canada has done.

We will continue to do that. We will continue to work with our provincial partners and ministers of justice across the country to make sure our communities and our people are safe.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I recently came across a report from the Department of Justice of the Government of Canada from January 2002. This expert report pans the idea of mandatory minimum sentences and concludes that it could be "a colossal waste of justice system resources".

I know the government members always throw back at us that they are listening to the victims of crime and not all the experts, but surely they should listen to their own Department of Justice.

• (1740)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, we also listen to front-line law enforcement officials across this country, officials like union president Tom Stamatakis, who said:

Whether it is by keeping dealers and producers off the streets and out of business, or by serving as a deterrent to potential dealers, this proposed legislation will help our members in doing their jobs and keeping our communities safe. In simple terms, keep these criminals in jail longer, and you take away their opportunity to traffic in drugs.

We are going to continue to listen to our front-line law enforcement officers. They are the ones who are dealing with this every day. We are going to stand and support our police across the country.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the subject of overcrowding and double-bunking, I want to read something from Lyle Stewart of the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers:

It raises the tensions in institutions where the tension levels are already very high. There's no question that it increases inmate-on-inmate violence, but it also increases the risk when correctional officers open the cell door. Often times that's when an inmate will choose to attack an officer, but now you've got two inmates in there.

Why does the government want to put correctional service officers at risk and in danger?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I think we all owe a great debt of gratitude to those people who work in our prisons day in and day out rehabilitating criminals who are in there and protecting our people and keeping them safe.

Government Orders

I share the member's concern about making sure that we protect these very brave Canadians who work in our jail system. That is why our government is investing in an expansion of jails. I have two in my riding, one in my hometown of Truro and one in Springhill. We are investing in an expansion of both those prisons, making sure that we have enough personnel in those buildings and the physical space to make sure those people can conduct their jobs safely.

We are going to continue to invest in our prison system. We are going to continue to invest in the human resources, the people who work in the prison system.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus on a couple of aspects of Bill C-10.

Why has the government decided to bring in this bill at this time? It has a lot to do with propaganda. It has a lot to do with the government wanting to give the appearance to Canadians that it wants to be tough on crime. If the Conservatives really want to do Canadians a favour, they should get tough on the causes of crime or they should get tough on fighting crime. Bill C-10 would not result in less crime being committed on our streets or in our communities.

The government is trying to send a dated message to Canadians. It is a message that was tried many years ago in the United States. It was that right-wing conservative thinking which ultimately said that to beat crime, people had to be thrown in jail and kept there for a long period of time.

The jurisdictions that bought that argument built the jails and the jails exceeded capacity. Did it cause the crime rate to go down? No. If we compared some of the states in the deep south of the U.S. where megaprisons were built with states in the north, such as New York, we would find that the crime rate did not go down in the deep south. The jails did not help.

The Conservative government is convinced that the way to appease Canadians and to make Canadians think that their streets will be safer, is to bring in legislation that would foster more and bigger jails. The government would do far better in trying to make our streets safer so Canadians can sleep better at night by taking action to prevent crimes from taking place in the first place.

For a number of years I was the justice critic in the province of Manitoba. I have a good sense in terms of what works and what does not work. I have also served on youth justice committees as chair and as a layperson. I know there are many other things we could be doing that would have a far greater impact on preventing crime.

When I knock on doors in my constituency of Winnipeg North, I tell people that there should be consequences for crime. There is no doubt about that. If we are going to start getting tough, then let us start getting tough on fighting crime, on preventing some crimes from occurring in the first place.

How do we do that? In good part we do it by thinking outside the box. We do not even have to think outside the box; we could support some of the things that are out there right now.

How do we get young people, for example, to shy away from getting involved in gang activities? This is a serious problem in most of Canada's urban centres. It is a concern in the city of Winnipeg. Winnipeg is a beautiful city; I love it to death. There are all sorts of

wonderful opportunities in Winnipeg. A vast majority of young people in Winnipeg are outstanding, but there is a certain percentage of youth who are being lured into activities that are not what I would classify as being of benefit to the community as a whole. There are some things we could do as legislators to improve the likelihood that those youth will not fall into the trap of prostitution, selling drugs, or getting involved in gangs.

I am interested in making sure that government policy allows us to deal with the issue at hand. The issue at hand is how to prevent crimes from taking place in the first place.

• (1745)

I have no love for pedophiles who commit these heinous crimes. I believe in consequences for those severe crimes. However, I do not necessarily buy-in to what the Americans were trying back 15 or 20 years ago. We will find that many of those strong Conservatives who advocated for the big jail concept no longer do. They have tried that experiment and it did not work. Now they are talking about how to get people back into communities and trying to develop other programs in order to prevent crimes in the first place.

One could talk about some of the bizarreness of the legislation. We have members who were officers of the law on the Conservative side who talked about the teeth in the legislation. Also, earlier today I made reference to a *Winnipeg Free Press* story on September 26. It is from Ethan Baron, a Vancouver columnist. He is not a member of Parliament and would be unbiased. I believe he is someone who would not likely have a party membership. The article states:

A pedophile who gets a child to watch pornography with him, or a pervert exposing himself to kids at a playground, would receive a minimum 90-day sentence, half the term of a man convicted of growing six pot plants in his own home.

For the member who canvasses his constituents and poses questions to them, I wonder what his constituents would have to say about that quote.

I do not question the fact that some aspects of Bill C-10 are positive. However, let us look at what is being proposed. It is a piece of legislation that I have never experienced in my many years inside the Manitoba legislature. There are many bills of substance in this one omnibus bill, but the Conservatives have told this chamber that we have a limited time to debate all of the bills. Their argument is that they have a mandate.

Of the 39% of Canadians who voted for them, yes, that is a mandate, and I know the Conservatives won the most seats. However, there is a thing called respect.

It is a privilege for all of us to be in this parliamentary precinct, the House of Commons. We should be respecting the fact that there is a responsibility for us to go through legislation in a timely fashion. However, this is not as if we are just putting the word "the" or "a" into these bills. These are all bills of great substance within Bill C-10. It is a lack of respect for this chamber for the Conservatives to try to force through Bill C-10 and then put a time limit on debate.

Government Orders

In this bill, the government has a grouping, but what is next? Are we going to see another bill making reference to 25 bills from the Conservative brochures in the last election? Would the Conservatives now have the support of Canadians and the mandate to have an omnibus bill that would include those 25 bills? Would they want us to pass those bills all in one omnibus bill?

The Conservative government needs to respect what is taking place today. For many of those backbenchers, this is the first time they have been elected to the House. As well, for many of the New Democrats, it is their first time as members of Parliament. To what degree have they been afforded the opportunity to speak on what should have been separate bills?

The principle of this legislature is supposed to be all about that. We are supposed to be here to thoroughly debate and ensure there is accountability from the different ministers who would be responsible for those bills. Shame on the government for not recognizing the importance of democracy and not respecting the importance of this chamber in allowing members to have dialogue on this. If members want to sit 24 hours, 7 days a week, I am game if that is what they want to do. Why put in the limits? Why force members of Parliament to speak only ten minutes, which is barely enough time to address one bill?

I suggest the government would be best advised to break up the bill. It needs to look in the mirror and wonder if it has gone too far.

• (1750)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two points I want to raise.

The first is the member opposite says that the government does not have a mandate to bring in this legislation because only 39% of Canadians voted for our Conservative government. When I look at the results of the last election in his riding, he got 35% of the vote in his riding. What mandate does he have to tell the House what we can or cannot bring forward?

We won 166 seats in the House specifically on a mandate to bring forward this legislation. Thirty-nine per cent of Canadians voted for this government. We have 166 seats and a majority government. Liberals have 34 seats. He got 35% of the votes in his riding. What mandate does he have to stand in the House and say that his constituents do not want this bill? He does not have that mandate. He has 35%.

There is another thing in his speech with which I take offence. He has suggested that somehow we can either be law and order, support the police, have prisons and tough laws or we can help kids on the other side and have some preventive justice. It is such a nonsensical, laughable argument that he makes, that it is a this or that proposition. The fact is we have put forward all kinds of proposals, policies and programs to support those who are at risk.

I will tell him about a project in my riding called S.U.C.C.E.S.S., which helps kids who are the most at risk, the most troubled kids in our society who live in my community and need some support and structure. These are kids who have a last opportunity to get some structure in their lives, some discipline and opportunity for growth.

We funded that program, we built that program, and those kids are now moving forward in their lives.

It is not a this or that proposition, it is both, and we are getting it done with 39% of the vote, not 35%.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is what happens when a government sits in power a little too long. Having a majority now, it believes, in an arrogant way, that it can do whatever it is it wants. There is a moral, if not ethical, and some would suggest legal obligation, to respect the legislature and parliamentary law. There is the need to acknowledge that. Just because the Conservative government has the most seats does not mean that it is a little dictator. There is an issue of respect in allowing legitimate debate on important issues facing Canadians. Just because it has a majority does not mean it gets to dictate everything that happens in the country over the next four years, in a dictatorship way.

He posed a question with regard to programs. Believe it or not, the government has a finite amount of money and it has a choice. It can put x number of dollars here or x number of dollars there. If it puts more money over here, it means less money over there. We are suggesting—

• (1755)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The member for Winnipeg North will come to order. I am sure other hon. members want the opportunity to put a question or comment to the hon. member.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague on a number of issues. One of those issues is that Parliament has not had the time to have the kind of debate it requires. I heard my other colleague say that we had debated this last year, the year before and the year before that, but those bills did not pass. Those bills are before this Parliament and I believe Parliament should be given the time to debate them.

What kind of prevention programs could you see this bill addressing instead of the interrogation route, which members across the aisle seem to be pushing?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members to put their comments and questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment. I, for one, would ultimately argue that all members should have been afforded the opportunity at some point to provide comment on all nine of the bills that have been bundled together in this one bill.

With regard to programs, there is a litany of programs. Some programs are currently in place in which we could enhance programs that would prevent youth from getting involved in gangs. Members will recall one of the first questions I ever asked in Parliament dealt with programs like O.A.S.I.S. on which the government was looking at cutting back. There are programs that take youth who have a higher risk of going into gangs and preventing them from doing so. There is community policing. There are many programs we could have looked at as alternatives.

Government Orders

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today in the House to add my voice to those of my hon. colleagues who have spoken so passionately in favour of this legislation.

Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act represents sweeping change to laws that we believe are no longer acceptable as they stand. It enacts common sense measures that are long overdue.

On May 2, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe. Part of that means delivering on our promise to strengthen victims' rights, to protect our most vulnerable and to ensure serious criminals serve serious sentences. The legislation before us will go a long way to helping us fulfill our pledge to Canadians.

As we have heard during the debate, the safe streets and communities act contains many important components. These include measures that protect our children from violent sexual offenders, that restrict house arrest and conditional sentences and that target organized crime by imposing tougher sentences on drug dealers.

Today I will focus on the reforms to our correctional system. Specifically, these proposed amendments enshrine in law a victim's right to participate in parole hearings and address inmate accountability, responsibility and management under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Allow me to give hon. members a brief background to this measure. In 2007 our government undertook an important review process of Correctional Service Canada. This was done through an independent panel, which studied the business plans, priorities and strategies of the agency.

The panel released its final report in December 2007. It was entitled, "A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety". It included no fewer than 109 recommendations that fell under five themes: offender accountability; eliminating drugs from prisons; physical infrastructure; employability/employment; and moving to earn parole.

This report represented a road map that would help us improve rehabilitation, provide a safer environment for employees and, most important, enhance public safety.

Our government has already made important progress on two key areas laid out by that independent panel, those drug use in our prison system and addressing the problems of offenders dealing with mental illness.

The legislation before us today proposes reforms in four more key areas that were proposed by that independent panel some four years ago. These areas include providing better support for victims of crime, enhancing the accountability and responsibility of offenders, strengthening the management of offender re-integration and modernizing prison discipline.

Let us start with the first item, providing better support for victims of crime. Canadians have told us that victims of crime deserve to have their interests and concerns brought to the forefront. For me, that is certainly the priority.

The amendments we have proposed are in direct response to what we have heard from victims and victims' rights groups across our country. They have asked our government to give them a stronger voice, and we are proud to deliver.

Victims often have to travel from far distances to be in attendance at parole hearings. The problem is that under the existing legislation, offenders can withdraw their participation in the hearing at the last minute, effectively cancelling the parole hearing.

We believe this is fundamentally unfair to victims of crime and we propose to fix this. The bill proposes that if an offender withdraws his or her participation 14 days or less before a hearing date, the Parole Board may still go ahead with the scheduled meeting regardless. It also gives victims the right to find out why the offender has withdrawn his or her attendance at the parole hearing.

These two measures would go a long way to ensuring victims minimize further financial and emotional hardship. Bill C-10 will also ensure that victims have a legal right to attend and make statements at parole hearings.

The safe streets and communities act will also amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to allow victims and their families to obtain more information about an offender through Correctional Service Canada and from the Parole Board of Canada. This includes information about the reasons for temporary absences from custody as well as updates on the offender's participation in his or her correctional plan.

Victims would also have the right to request information on why an offender is being transferred between institutions and particularly, whenever possible, advance notice when the offender is being transferred to a minimum security institution. They would also be allowed to obtain information on any serious disciplinary offences that offenders commit while serving their sentence.

• (1800)

Just as importantly, guardians and caregivers of dependents of victims who are deceased, ill or otherwise incapacitated, will have access to the same information that victims can receive. This is important because these guardians and caregivers play an important role in the ongoing care of victims and their dependents.

In terms of providing victims more of a voice, this legislation is an important step forward that will help put victims rights at the forefront of the corrections and parole system. I think that should be the prime concern of all members of this House.

The second change focuses on the offenders themselves. As I mentioned earlier, a key recommendation from the independent panel was to make offenders more accountable. As such, Bill C-10 contains amendments that will ensure that rehabilitation, as well as reintegration into the community, is a shared responsibility between offenders and Correctional Service Canada.

The question is, what does this mean practically? It means that offenders will be required to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful of other people and their property. It means that offenders must obey the rules set out by the institution where they are serving their sentence, as well as heed all conditions that govern release.

Above all, it means restoring common sense. Offenders will simply not receive benefits for bad behaviour. Offenders will also be responsible to actively participate in their correctional plan.

As part of these amendments, the legislation allows for the establishment of incentive measures that will promote offender participation in their correctional plan. We firmly believe that with appropriate programs and active participation from both the offender and the corrections system that many individuals can become law-abiding citizens.

The successful rehabilitation and reintegration of an offender into a community is a shared responsibility. We are committed to providing appropriate programs to offenders, but it is only fair to expect offenders to do their part.

That is the message that we have heard consistently from Canadians, from victims, from advocacy groups and from our corrections officers. By enshrining in law the importance of correctional plans, we are sending a message that engaging offenders in their own reintegration into the community is an important part of our correctional system.

Both the offender and Correctional Service Canada have a part to plan in meeting that objective. These reforms will also take particular note of offenders with mental health issues, and ensure that their correctional plans are developed properly. This is reasonable and fair.

The correctional plan will play an important role in the lives of each offender, setting out the expected behaviours, the need to participate in rehabilitation programs, and also the requirement to fulfill all court-ordered financial obligations.

The third part of these reforms involves how offenders are managed in the community. For example, the amendments will give police the power to arrest an offender without a warrant if it appears that he or she is in violation of their release conditions. It will automatically suspend the parole or conditional release of an offender if that individual receives a new custodial sentence.

We come now to the final area of reform related to this component of Bill C-10. This covers amendments to modernize the system of prison discipline. Specifically, two new disciplinary offences will be created: first, knowingly making a false claim for compensation from the Crown; and second, throwing a bodily substance at another person. The reforms will also address disrespectful and abusive behaviour.

We also propose to allow the Commissioner of Correctional Service Canada to designate sub-populations. By this I mean moving beyond the traditional designations of minimum, medium and maximum. This will better reflect the diversity of the inmate population and the challenges of managing subgroups that are often incompatible.

Government Orders

These measures will go a long way toward our commitment to transform our corrections system and to put victims first. We believe these changes are needed, and they are needed now.

● (1805)

I urge the NDP to finally stop putting the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of law-abiding Canadians and support this legislation.

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened and I do not understand the bill on many levels. The problem that we have right now is that the hon. member seems to think that she knows what she is talking about when she talks about correctional services. I have eight and a half years under my belt and I know what I am talking about when I talk about victims and correctional services.

The question that I have is, all this being said, how will this bill impact the federal institution? What about the provinces that right now are absolutely incapable of handling what is going on with the surplus of criminals? What is her plan? Because apparently the government has said that it does not intend to give any money whatsoever to the provinces for this bill.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, in fact, we just provided \$2.4 billion very recently. More to the point though, I think the fundamental issue here is that we are just expressing far too much sympathy for the criminals when in fact most Canadians would want us to express our sympathy for the victims. That is what this bill does.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question comes from the perspective of a new member of Parliament. I am, quite frankly, having some difficulty as a new member of Parliament wrestling with my obligation as a parliamentarian to be able to debate this bill in an abbreviated fashion when the costs to the Canadian taxpayer, both from a federal perspective and a provincial perspective, have not been made clear.

I know my colleague is also newly elected and not overly partisan. I wonder whether she shares my difficulty in fulfilling her role as a parliamentarian in debating a bill that has not been costed at either the provincial or the federal level.

● (1810)

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to take a question from my critic on veterans affairs, so I thank him for the opportunity to respond.

In fact, as I mentioned in my speech, an independent panel was commissioned some four years ago to look at the situation in our prisons and it came out with over a hundred individual recommendations. The bill, in its component parts, has been before the House a number of times over a number of years. It has been studied, it has been debated, it has been discussed. At some point I think Canadians want us to act in the best interests of victims.

This report has been gathering dust on bookshelves for over four years. Only two of its recommendations were implemented. We propose, through this comprehensive legislation, to finally implement many of the additional recommendations.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the parliamentary secretary aware that Bill C-10 is absolutely unacceptable to Quebec? I have in my hands a unanimous motion from the National Assembly of Quebec that was submitted when the Conservative government introduced these omnibus justice bills, as it is doing now. The motion states that these bills do not protect Quebec's philosophy of rehabilitation and social reintegration in matters of youth criminal justice.

Youth centres in Quebec have all also spoken out against this type of bill, as has the Barreau du Québec, of course. If the parliamentary secretary is not already aware of this, I am letting her know now and I will forward her the documents. However, if she is already aware of this, can she tell me why the government does not agree to split the bill since it does have some good measures but it also has many measures that, as I said, are not acceptable to Quebec?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

[English]

I reject the premise of the question. I sincerely doubt that Quebecers as a whole would somehow not support allowing victims to show up at parole hearings. I cannot imagine that Quebecers, as an entire group and province, would not want their victims notified when a criminal decides to withdraw his or her participation in a parole hearing at the last minute. Do Quebecers truly want victims to have to show up, go to great expense to get to a parole hearing just to have nobody show up and then have to go all the way back home at great emotional and financial cost to themselves? That is ludicrous. I do not believe that for an instant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I call on the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for resuming debate, I will inform her that we only have two minutes remaining for the time allotted for this debate.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking and this debate is closing far too soon for those of us who believe that we are on the verge of a very large, serious mistake that future parliamentarians will have to struggle to correct.

First, let me say to the hon. government benches and the members here where we agree. I would happily vote for the victim of terrorism act, and I would vote to change the Criminal Records Act to replace the word "pardon" with "record suspension". However, I will be forced to vote against this legislation if it comes packaged with sections that would cause this country nothing but grief.

I wish to say to all hon. members on the government side whose talking points have repeatedly forced them to say that those who question the flawed premise of mandatory minimum sentences have somehow sided with criminals against victims. Nothing could be further from the truth. Members of my family are involved in law enforcement. People close to me have been murdered. It is not as though we side with criminals when we recognize a piece of legislation is so egregiously flawed that this place should say no.

We look at all the evidence from criminologists, not just one or two, but all of them. We look at evidence from our own Department of Justice that studied this matter in 2002. We look at what is happening in the U.S., not only at the fact that its prisons are full of people but its prisons are full of people who are disproportionately low-income and Black. We also look at what could happen in this country. We have seen the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the report on the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System. We know that with this legislation, without many changes, we would disproportionately fill our jails with people who should not be in jail.

We also know that this legislation would cost us billions, which has not been fully costed.

Yet, at the end of the day, it may actually result in weaker sentences for those who deserve higher sentences because we would ruin the opportunity for judicial discretion.

• (1815)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, September 27, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the amendment will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Ye.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1840)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 33)***YEAS****Members**

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala

Government Orders

Bélanger	Bellavance	Butt	Calandra
Bennett	Benskin	Calkins	Cannan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothé	Carmichael	Carrie
Boivin	Borg	Chisu	Chong
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet	Clarke	Clement
Brahmi	Brisson	Daniel	Davidson
Brosseau	Byrne	Dechert	Del Mastro
Caron	Casey	Devolin	Dreeschen
Cash	Charlton	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Chicoine	Chisholm	Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Choquette	Chow	Flaherty	Fletcher
Christopherson	Cleary	Galipeau	Gallant
Coderre	Comartin	Gill	Glover
Côté	Crowder	Goguen	Goodyear
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Gosal	Gourde
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day	Grewal	Harper
Dewar	Dion	Hawn	Hayes
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly	Hiebert	Hillyer
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé	Hoback	Hoepfner
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Holder	James
Duscault	Easter	Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Eyking	Foote	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Fortin	Freeman	Kent	Kerr
Fry	Garneau	Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Garrison	Genest	Lake	Lauzon
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère	Lebel	Leef
Godin	Goodale	Leitch	Lemieux
Gravelle	Grogg	Leung	Lizon
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	Lobb	Lukiwski
Hassani	Hsu	Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
Hughes	Hyer	MacKenzie	Mayes
Jacob	Julian	McColeman	McLeod
Karygiannis	Kellway	Menegakis	Menzies
Lamoureux	Larose	Merrifield	Miller
Latendresse	Laverdière	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Leslie	Liu	Nicholson	Norlock
MacAulay	Mai	O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Marston	Martin	Obhrai	Oda
Masse	Mathysen	Oliver	Opitz
May	McCallum	Paradis	Payne
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Penashue	Poillievre
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Preston	Raitt
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Reid	Rempel
Mulcair	Murray	Richards	Richardson
Nantel	Nash	Rickford	Ritz
Nicholls	Nuncz-Melo	Saxton	Schellenberger
Pacetti	Papillon	Seebach	Shea
Patry	Péclet	Shiplay	Shory
Perreault	Pilon	Smith	Sopuck
Quach	Rafferty	Sorenson	Stanton
Ravignat	Raynault	Storseth	Strahl
Regan	Rousseau	Sweet	Tilson
Saganash	Sandhu	Toet	Toews
Savoie	Scarpaleggia	Trost	Trottier
Sellah	Sgro	Truppe	Tweed
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)		Uppal	Valcourt
Sims (Newton—North Delta)		Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Sitsabaesan		Vellacott	Wallace
Stewart	St-Denis	Warawa	Warkentin
Sullivan	Stoffer	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Toone	Thibault	Sky Country)	
Trudeau	Tremblay	Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Valeriote — 133	Turmel	Williamson	Wong
		Woodworth	Yelich
		Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
		Zimmer — 159	

NAYS**Members**

Ablonczy	Adams
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Amblar	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooze

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.*[English]*

The next question is on the main motion.

Government Orders

● (1850)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 34)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Gailepeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukivski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Potlievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seebach	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier

Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 159

Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulrice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dussault	Easter
Eyking	Footé
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogue
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Pécllet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Trudeau

Turnel

Valeriote—134

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1855)

[English]

VETERANS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I brought a question to the House that was really a humanitarian question. It was a question about services that were missing for veterans and were causing great problems for an individual who did not deserve that kind of neglect.

The answer I got back to a genuine concern was a pure platitude, so I will give the Conservative government opposite another opportunity to address this concern from a constituent in Vancouver Quadra.

The essence of my concern is that Veterans Affairs is failing those whom it is designed to serve and that the government's spending priorities are completely out of whack. It has allowed this problem to happen.

To recap my question, it was about retired Major Gordon MacLean Logan, a 93-year-old veteran who was wounded six times in World War II in Italy and whose entire career was spent in the military.

This gentleman has been using the veterans independence program, to which he is entitled, and that has helped maintain his independence.

His caseworker used to come to his house to meet with him when necessary, but over the past three years the Veterans Affairs Canada caseworkers have become swamped, and retired Major Logan and his family have had to pull teeth to get service.

Major Logan had been restricted to his home for more than six months due to mobility issues that were completely preventable. Veterans Affairs Canada had authorized equipment, and then it failed to complete the paperwork so that it could be installed.

Finally Major Logan's own daughter paid up front for the porch lift. She put her own money on the line in order to help her father. A complaint was filed with the Veterans Ombudsman, but the family has never heard back. That was the case that I brought to the minister.

Adjournment Proceedings

Since I have raised this issue in the House and written a letter to the minister, I will acknowledge that the office of the veterans affairs minister attempted to reach the family. It left a message. However, when the family tried to call back, their messages were never answered.

The Veterans Ombudsman's office did call the family that had filed this complaint. It left a message. When the family made several attempts to call back, they received a message saying that the ombudsman's office could not take calls.

Unfortunately, Major Logan has been in rehabilitation in a transitional care unit because of a progressive debilitation and weakness from not having mobility. The family is optimistic that he will get home soon and that the future will be better.

My question really is this: why is the government spending \$450 million just this year on one of the parts of the Conservative crime bill while neglecting Veterans Affairs Canada and all of the invisible veterans who do not have the family or the ability to actually file a complaint and insist on help?

• (1900)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question on behalf of Canada's decorated veterans.

While I have not personally met Major Logan, his service in the Second World War tells us everything that we need to know about this retired major's devotion to Canada and his dedication to our shared values of peace, freedom and democracy.

I am sure that all Canadians feel the same gratitude and pride knowing Mr. Logan's remarkable story of courage and sacrifice. I am sure they are also concerned, as am I, to hear that Mr. Logan is in failing health and that he may not be receiving all the help that he has earned and so much deserves.

I will reassure the House that our government is committed to ensuring that all veterans receive the services and benefits they are entitled to without fail and without exception.

I thank the member opposite for her question regarding the spending on behalf of veterans. It is an issue that seems to receive too little attention in this chamber. I welcome the chance to share the facts.

First and foremost, I believe Canadians will be reassured to know that, over the past five years, our government has invested heavily in veterans and their families. That includes investing in sweeping improvements through the new veterans charter and doubling the number of operational stress injury clinics, facilities where soldiers who return emotionally scarred by the intensity and trauma of the theatre can receive support and assistance in their recovery.

We have also established a veterans bill of rights and created the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman to strengthen the government's ability to respond quickly and fairly to the concerns of Canada's veterans. It includes extending the veterans independence program to more widows and widowers of veterans, and restoring and expanding benefits to our allied veterans.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have done all of this for one reason and one reason only. It is because it is the right thing to do on behalf of Canada's veterans, because we owe them so much and because we intend to, in the best ways we can, repay the enormous debt of gratitude they have earned on behalf of this country.

• (1905)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Veterans Affairs case-workers are overworked, calls are not being answered and veterans are imprisoned in their own homes through a lack of services that they have been promised.

Could the government explain why it would rather spend \$500,000 on one crime bill rather than on supporting veterans in their time of need? Could the government explain yet another tax cut to the largest and most profitable corporations and yet Veterans Affairs will be seeing budget cuts because of the profligate spending in the past by the government?

We need to think of the inhumanity of the choices that are being made by the government and of the access to services being denied to our veterans through the shortcomings in planning and compassion on the part of the Conservative government.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that Canadians are grateful for retired Major Logan's service to our country. We understand the great debt we owe all of our veterans. That is why we have worked so hard over the last five years to make improvements in the benefits and services for these courageous men and women. That is why we continue to invest in benefits and programs that will make a real difference in the lives of our veterans. That is why new enhancements to the new veterans charter will come into force in the coming weeks. That is why new enhancements to other programs have already been implemented, whether it is the operational stress injury clinics or the improved programs for wounded soldiers who come back from theatre.

We are continuing to make the best investments in ensuring that those who serve us are treated with the utmost care and that every one of their needs, to the best of our ability, is fulfilled. We will continue to work with veterans to ensure that they are honoured and that they receive the care and love they deserve.

WINDSOR-DETROIT BORDER CROSSING

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk again about the Canada-U.S. border, in particular, the Windsor-Detroit border.

On June 21, I asked a question of the minister because we have a border crossing, a brand new crossing, blocked by the State of Michigan right now. The corridor along the Windsor-Detroit gateway has 40% of Canada's daily trade and we have aging infrastructure.

I started my municipal career in 1997 with the first public meeting to get a new border crossing. Since that time, we have gone through a lot of ups and downs, pushing on several governments, to get a new border crossing capacity to deal with the challenges of the modern infrastructure necessary to be competitive with the United States. We finally had an agreement through the DRIC process, a binational planning process, to create that new infrastructure. A lot of compromise has taken place to get to that point.

However, the final decision necessary to get the bridge built has been blocked in Lansing, Michigan, for a number of months now. This crossing is very important because a lot of Canadian trade, jobs and social economy moving back and forth is dependent on it. I asked the government to intervene in June and to be more forceful, active and engaged.

There is a private American citizen, who owns the Ambassador Bridge, lobbying with millions of dollars to protect his empire and his monopoly. That is at the expense of the environment and the economy. With more delays we would see the expense of the project going up. Things do not go down. We would see a greater cost borne by citizens and the payback for the project would take longer. I wanted the minister to get more engaged in June.

Right now we still have Michigan debating this law in Lansing and we still see a vacuum of leadership from the Minister of Transport on this file. We have not seen the type of leadership necessary to get the ball over the goal line, so to speak.

It is important that this is not seen as just a local issue. This is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in Canadian history. It is one of the most important things for our economy and trade with the United States. There are 34 states that have Canada as a number one trading partner. This is a conduit and lifeline for much of that trade and affects everything.

A quick example is the auto industry. An automobile built in Windsor or Detroit, Michigan, like the Volt, will literally have parts going back and forth across the border a number of times. This is why businesses have been in favour of this and environmental groups have been in favour of this to get some of the idling trucks off the city streets.

There has been great compromise by the citizens who have to bear the result of the construction and subsequent inconvenience. We need this to be successful right now. We need better leadership from the government to ensure that Michigan knows that we need to get this across the goal line. The government also has to engage Washington to ensure it is pushing this issue as well.

• (1910)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will be pleased to learn that I agree with him. Most of the action that he has implored of this government is already done.

We support the bridge. We have set aside the funds. We have a plan to recover the costs through a system of tolls. We are accelerating, to the best of our ability, the approvals for the entire construction to go ahead.

He correctly points out that the decision now rests with the Michigan legislature and that it is up to legislators in that body to decide whether or not they want to have the jobs, the economic opportunities, and the enormous spinoffs that this project would engender in their communities.

To date, we have worked with businesses and other stakeholders who share our interest. They include local communities, unions, trade associations, Michigan's Fortune 500 companies, the big three automakers, the chambers of commerce, Michigan agri-food industry, and neighbouring states. All the benefits of this project are accrued to them and as such, they are supporting the project and exercising their influence, accordingly.

Most significant, though, since taking office in January 2011, the Michigan governor and the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario have become strong champions of the project. This government has made an effort to assist the governor with his efforts in convincing the Michigan legislators to support the building of the crossing. Our consulate general in Detroit has been promoting the project at every opportunity, even delivering speeches to business groups, chambers of commerce, and has met with individually Michigan legislators, in an effort to educate them and the citizens of the benefits of this new crossing.

We have also been working closely with the Canadian embassy in Washington in providing outreach and advocacy, to ensure that accurate information about the project is present.

Officials from Transport Canada have also been making, and will continue to make, significant efforts to advance this project. They have conducted detailed briefings on the project with state senators and other legislators to answer any questions that may remain.

As the hon. member will know, as he participated in the event staged last month by Transport Canada, we have also conducted several tours with Michigan legislators and border stakeholders.

In June, a senior official from Transport Canada, along with our consulate general in Michigan, Detroit, testified at the senate economic committee and reiterated Canada's financial commitment of \$550 million to cover the costs of project components in Michigan that would not be funded by the public-private partnership, to ensure that this project moves ahead.

We are 100% behind this project. We will continue to work toward its success.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's intervention.

What I think needs to happen next is a greater emphasis back on Washington to get Michigan moving again. There needs to be a real analysis of the current Ambassador Bridge by the government, in terms of its safety record, auditing its structure and all those things.

The International Bridges and Tunnels Act came into effect a number of years ago. New Democrats worked with minister Cannon at that time to get some amendments in the bill. So, there was compromise on both sides to ensure that the legislation was passed.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to go back to the minister and encourage him to get to Lansing himself, as well as other senior

officials, and to Washington. That is where we need that full-court press to get the job done.

The U.S. is having another round of elections. Matty Moroun, who owns the Ambassador Bridge, provided over \$1 million of financing to elected officials in the United States during the last session. There will probably be more of that influence happening again. That is the challenge that we face: just getting it over the last hump.

• (1915)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, once again, I have to agree with the hon. member and I thank him for his intervention on this important subject.

The latest developments in the decision-making of the Michigan government is that the senate economic development committee in that state has now resumed hearings on the crossing.

Our government remains committed to the project. We are pushing hard to convince and to inform hon. members of that chamber of the worthiness of this project. We expect that there will be a vote sometime either in the late fall or early winter. We will continue to press as hard as we can to ensure that jobs, opportunity, and growth are achieved by proceeding with this important project.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me these few moments to discuss an issue that I brought up in the House some time ago. In general, it is an issue of grave importance for Newfoundland and Labrador. It is an issue that certainly deals with the safety factor of Newfoundland and Labrador, and certainly deals with the entire east coast, because we are talking about two entities here.

Let me just recap. Because of the last budget we had a closure of a sub-centre, what we call a maritime rescue sub-centre, in St. John's, Newfoundland, and one also in Quebec. What these two centres provided was an extra amount of assistance to the larger centres, which are described as the JRCC, or the joint rescue coordination centres. These centres handle incoming calls from people in distress, primarily in the offshore area.

Two departments come together, Fisheries and Oceans and the Department of National Defence, to handle these situations. One is primarily the vertical lift, or lift from the air, which is a part of search and rescue through the Department of National Defence. My question answered by the fisheries minister on that day obviously dealt with the Coast Guard. Of course, the Coast Guard, even though it is its own special operating agency, is still part of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

What brings on this closure? What provides the available evidence that the closure of this centre can be absorbed, not just from a financial aspect, but also from a safety aspect?

It is an incredibly busy site. It is busy in the sense that a lot of the local calls come into this one particular centre because the people who work in the centres certainly know the geography and certainly know their jobs extremely well.

Adjournment Proceedings

What is happening is that these positions are being absorbed at the JRCC, which is in Halifax. I wish no ill will toward this particular centre in Halifax, which does a wonderful job as well, but there are aspects of the MRSC that was in St. John's in Newfoundland and Labrador that will be closed, yet are desperately needed in this area.

I will provide one quick example: ice survey. Ice surveys are done across the country. They are headquartered here in Ottawa. It is a national ice service. It does some work in the MRSC, and the reason for doing some of it there is because of the local aspect. It is a local investigation that they must undertake; therefore, they leave Ottawa, go to St. John's, Newfoundland, and monitor the ice situation. The vast majority of ice observations take place across the eastern part of the island.

This is a good example of why this centre exists in the first place.

Therefore, I humbly ask the parliamentary secretary what constitutes the decision to say that we can close this centre down and safety will not be compromised. The evidence proves otherwise.

● (1920)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member of Parliament for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, for the opportunity to comment on the consolidation of the St. John's maritime rescue sub-centre with the joint rescue coordination centres in Halifax and Trenton. I know he works hard for his constituents and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, so I understand and appreciate his interest in this matter.

Let me start with the bottom line. Maritime safety continues to be the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard whose men and women work day in and day out to provide important and essential services, including icebreaking, aids to navigation, waterways management, marine communication and traffic services, environmental response, and search and rescue coordination and response services, which is the issue we are discussing this evening.

Currently, to provide search and rescue coordination service, the Canadian Coast Guard jointly operates with the Canadian Forces, as my colleague has said, three joint search and rescue coordination centres across Canada. In addition, the Canadian Coast Guard manages two marine rescue sub-centres in St. John's and Quebec City. These were started in 1976, but many factors have changed the way search and rescue is coordinated since then.

Current navigation technologies, alerting technologies and communication technologies allow us to safely and efficiently coordinate search and rescue efforts from one centre within each of the search and rescue regions that cover Canada.

By consolidating the sub-centres of St. John's and Quebec, this initiative would see the integration of all search and rescue coordination functions, both marine and air, at the three existing centres. Marine search and rescue mission coordinators will work side-by-side with their Canadian Forces colleagues facilitating a stronger co-operation in search and rescue mission coordination.

The consolidation of rescue sub-centres will improve the efficiency of Coast Guard operations.

I would like to emphasize that consolidation will not impact the excellent search and rescue coordination service that we currently provide to the maritime community in Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec.

As we move forward we will ensure implementation will be seamless and there will be no negative impacts to the aeronautical or maritime search and rescue services in Canada or to the safety of life at sea.

I would also like to point out that by joining Coast Guard marine search and rescue coordination service currently provided in St. John's and Quebec with the joint rescue coordination centres in Halifax and Trenton, we expect to improve coordination by locating all Coast Guard and Canadian Forces search and rescue services within the same centres.

I would like to reiterate that no changes are being made to the Canadian Coast Guard's capacity on the water. Canadian Coast Guard response resources will continue to work with other search and rescue service delivery partners such as Canadian Forces assets, volunteers and other local resources to respond to every distress call.

All officers, helicopters and vessels, including the two heavy icebreakers that were recently moved to the St. John's area, will remain in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will continue to ensure that local knowledge and expertise is embedded in the tools and training of the crews, mariners and Coast Guard employees.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm the department's commitment to ensuring the safety of the maritime community in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the rest of Canada through the Coast Guard's search and rescue service.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been parliamentary secretary for quite some time and he certainly knows the issues.

I have a few questions. He mentioned that with one centre closing, the resources and staff which were there are being moved into one centre and how that creates an advantage. I need to grasp exactly how that is supposed to work, if the groupings of these people are to improve the services, but the aspect that was local is eliminated and these people are no longer on the ground. A good illustration of that would be the situation in Quebec City where language becomes that barrier.

Could the member specifically address the language issue? Could he also give more detail as to why the grouping of these individuals into one centre in Halifax and closing down the sub-centre is going to improve that service? The final point is dollar value. How much money will this move save?

● (1925)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, it is our view that the consolidation of these sub-centres is a timely and sound decision given the evolution of technology in search and rescue over the past 30 years.

By consolidating our search and rescue coordination services, we will continue to provide the high level of service that we always have but we will do it in a way that brings value to Canadians.

Again, safety will continue to remain the highest priority for the Coast Guard.

Any reports that this decision will impact search and rescue response on the water are simply not true.

Careful thought was given to this decision by the minister and the Coast Guard. There will be the same level of capacity on the water.

Adjournment Proceedings

Local knowledge will continue to be used in search and rescue coordination. Service will continue to be available in both official languages.

This is a responsible decision on behalf of Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:26 p.m.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 29, 2011



Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 29, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

COPYRIGHT MODERNIZATION ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Industry) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act. (Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[Translation]

SAFEGUARDING CANADIANS' PERSONAL INFORMATION ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Industry) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-295, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan (designation of survivor).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to reintroduce this bill. This bill deals with a very important issue which was brought to my attention by a constituent, Thea Beil, who tragically died from a very rare form of cancer. In the process of tying up her affairs, she realized that after all the years she paid into the Canada pension plan she would not be allowed to designate a beneficiary because she had no surviving spouse or common law partner. She felt this was a very discriminatory element of the Canada pension plan.

I have brought this issue forward to the House. I have written to the minister to point out this discriminatory aspect of the Canada pension plan. Ms. Beil, who has now unfortunately passed away, paid into the Canada pension plan for over 25 years and had no opportunity to designate a beneficiary.

In this day and age, this kind of discrimination should not be allowed to exist. I know that provincial plans, for example, the B.C. superannuation plan, have provisions whereby a person can designate a beneficiary if the person has no spouse or partner. There should be the same sort of fairness at the federal level.

I introduce this bill in the name of Thea Beil who, before she tragically died, worked and contributed much to this country but was not able to designate a beneficiary for her Canada pension plan benefits.

I hope members of the House will support this bill to end this discrimination.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CANADA CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY ACT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-296, An Act to amend the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act and the Textile Labelling Act (animal fur or skin).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill. This bill would amend the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act and the Textile Labelling Act (animal fur or skin). I would like to thank the member for Parkdale—High Park for seconding the bill.

This bill was originally introduced by my colleague, Bill Siksay, the former member for Burnaby—Douglas. He did much work on this issue. I am delighted to introduce the bill and follow up on the work that he has been doing.

The bill would prohibit the import and sale of products made in whole or in part of dog or cat fur. It would also require all animal skins to be labelled with full disclosure of fur fibres on labels. Many Canadians are very concerned about the use of cat and dog fur and strongly support a ban on its use in imports.

Routine Proceedings

If we pass this bill, we would be joining Australia, Switzerland, the United States and the European Union in banning products that contain dog and cat skins and furs. As well, the labelling requirements would change. Under the current act, products can simply be labelled fur “fibre” no matter what quantity is involved. This bill would amend that to make sure there is explicit and clear labelling.

In presenting this bill, I want to note the incredible work of the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals. I know there are many Canadians who support this legislation.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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● (1010)

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-297, An Act respecting a National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be reintroducing this legislation. The bill would create a national suicide prevention strategy.

After I tabled the bill in the last Parliament it received the support of many organizations, municipalities and individuals across the country.

Suicide is an issue that touches every region of this country. The facts are clear. Over 3,500 Canadians, or 10 people per day, die by suicide each year. We need a coordinated strategy so that folks around the country working to prevent suicide are united in a concerted effort to ensure that our communities are no longer rocked by the loss of friends and family members.

I would like to congratulate the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention on its work.

A national strategy is needed to address the higher risks of suicide faced by queer youth, Canada's elderly, teens and young adults, first nations, Inuit, and people in remote communities.

I would encourage all parties to work together to establish a national suicide prevention strategy, because we have a responsibility to help prevent suicides.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-298, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act (lump sum)

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to reintroduce my private member's bill entitled “An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act (lump sum)”.

[Translation]

RCMP officers put their lives in danger in the service of Canada and no amount of money paid to their beneficiaries could ever compensate for their loss, but a payment of \$300,000 would at least

ensure that these families are not left in a vulnerable financial situation while they deal with their grief.

This bill would also ensure payment is made to the beneficiaries of every officer killed in the line of duty regardless of the length of the member's service.

[English]

I also wish to point out that the bill is consistent with one of the key priorities of the Canadian Police Association whose members have been on the Hill to bring their concerns directly to parliamentarians.

This is not a partisan issue. MPs from every party support this measure. I call on my Conservative colleagues in the House to encourage the public safety minister to support this initiative.

My colleague from Surrey North, our public safety critic, is pleased to second the bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (kidnapping of young person).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill to recognize the severity of kidnapping a child under the age of 16 by a stranger.

As most members know, earlier this month Kienan Hiebert was kidnapped from his residence in Sparwood. He was safely returned.

We must send a message to those who do these crimes that these crimes will not be tolerated in Canada.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1015)

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-300, An Act respecting a Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly introduce this bill.

The bill would establish the requirement for the Government of Canada to develop a federal framework for suicide prevention in consultation with the relevant non-governmental organizations, the relevant entity in each province and territory, as well as the relevant federal departments.

In Canada far too many lives are lost each year to suicide, almost 4,000, over 10 each day. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadian youth ages 10 to 24. Aboriginal youth suicide rates are especially troubling at five to seven times higher than the non-aboriginal rate. In Waterloo region's high schools, three youths lost their lives to suicide in just one single week last year.

Suicide has a horrific impact: shortened lives, grieving families, devastated friends and even broken communities.

There is already lots of good work being done in suicide prevention across the country, but with some federal coordination and federal leadership, we can do better for vulnerable Canadians.

I invite all hon. members to join me in supporting this very important non-partisan initiative.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act (open government).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the open government act. I want to recognize and pay tribute to the former information commissioner, John Reid. He and his staff actually drafted all of this bill to illustrate the shortcomings of an act that has not been reviewed since 1983.

I would also point out that the adoption of the bill actually would fulfill the campaign promise of the Conservative Party which, in its campaign literature in 2006, promised to introduce John Reid's open government act. It found its way into the federal accountability legislation in 2006 but was promptly removed by the time that bill received first reading.

The bill would seek to enhance and expand the access to information regime in this country. It would create a public interest override. The public interest would override the interests of the government in keeping something secret. It would seek to enhance the ability of members of the general public to know what their government was doing with their money, which I argue is a fundamental freedom and a cornerstone of any western democracy.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

LOUIS RIEL ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-302, An Act respecting Louis Riel.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sudbury for seconding the bill.

The bill would call upon the government to reverse the conviction of Louis Riel on the premise that Louis Riel was a hero, not a traitor. We do not seek to have Louis Riel pardoned, because a pardon would imply that he was guilty of something and we now forgive him. We seek to exonerate Louis Riel.

Routine Proceedings

We should take note that Louis Riel was a member of Parliament. He was elected three times to the Canadian Parliament and was never allowed to take his seat, although Métis lore has it that he did paddle his canoe to the foot of Parliament Hill with his Métis colleagues, climbed the cliff, entered his name into the permanent record and took his seat one night in 1871.

The people of Manitoba have recognized Louis Riel as a hero. There is a statue of Louis Riel on the grounds of Manitoba's legislative building.

On behalf of the Métis people of Canada, we believe that exonerating Louis Riel would be in the same spirit as the formal apology the Prime Minister gave to the survivors of Indian residential schools. We believe it is a necessary prerequisite to healing the relationship between the Métis people and the Government of Canada.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

● (1020)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-303, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (trans fatty acids).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I felt it necessary to introduce this private member's bill to seek to have Parliament ban trans fatty acids and to eliminate them to the greatest extent possible from our food supply.

Parliament spoke to this issue and voted, by a majority vote, to ban trans fatty acids but the government of the day and the subsequent Conservative government failed to act on the will of Parliament as expressed by that motion.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Medical Association and other scientific experts agree that this type of fat in our foods should be eliminated as it is far more harmful than other type of saturated fats in our food supply. Some measures have been taken to reduce the trans fatty acids in our food supply but Parliament was clear that it did not want trans fatty acids reduced by voluntary measures. It wanted it eliminated to the greatest extent possible. That is what this bill, when passed, would require.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA-EU PROCUREMENT AGREEMENT

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I submit yet another petition signed by hundreds of people from the Guelph and surrounding areas urging the government to exclude all sub-federal governments and their public agencies, including municipalities, from any Canada-EU procurement agreement.

Business of Supply

Municipalities, like Guelph, stand to lose the right to buy local materials and services, hindering our ability to stimulate local innovation, foster local community economic development, create local employment and achieve other valuable public policies.

The petitioners urge that the negotiations also be paused while there is a national consultation process. We must remove the veil of secrecy and introduce transparency into these negotiations by consulting Parliament, as is done in other countries that are part of these negotiations.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to introduce a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon Parliament to recognize and take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known.

In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial occupational causes combined and yet, they point out, Canada continues to spend millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, these petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities in which they live. They also call upon the government to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad.

They call upon government to stop using its international foreign missions and embassies to host trade junkets promoting and pushing asbestos internationally, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I bring forward a petition from individuals who are concerned about visitor visas not being approved.

In particular, one of the “whereas” clauses recognizes the importance of things, such as weddings, graduations, birthdays, funerals, other family gatherings, where family needs to be given extra consideration so that they can have people from abroad being able to participate with family members here in Canada.

Far too many visas are being denied without any basis of factual information about the people returning to countries where visas have been issued. The government does not have that kind of information and yet it is basing decisions and denying people the opportunity to be reunited with families.

* * *

• (1025)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 83 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 83—**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to participation by the government through the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC) in the sponsoring of a yacht in the Clipper 09-10 Round the World Yacht Race (Sponsorship Program): (a) what was the total overall budgeted cost of the Sponsorship Program, broken down by cost category including all the activities associated with the sponsorship; (b) what was the total overall actual cost of the Sponsorship Program compared to the budget; (c) what was the budget and actual cost for each trade event associated with the Sponsorship Program; (d) how many ECBC employees attended each specific international trade or non trade event as part of the Sponsorship Program; (e) how many businesses attended each trade event associated with the Sponsorship Program; (f) what was the travel cost of ECBC employees who attended the Sponsorship Program events, broken down by each event; (g) what was the cost of subsidizing non government employees to attend international Sponsorship Program events, broken down by event; (h) what were the evaluation results from non government employees who partook in the Sponsorship Program events; (i) what evaluation metrics were put in place to determine the effectiveness of the cost of the total Sponsorship Program; and (j) what evaluation results have been received to date on the effectiveness of the Sponsorship Program?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADIAN ECONOMY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should: (a) take immediate action to promote job creation and address the persistently high unemployment rate among Canadian workers, particularly high among young Canadians, in the context of the International Monetary Fund prediction of yet higher unemployment rates in the future unless swift action is taken; (b) take immediate action to ensure all Canadians can rely on a stable and guaranteed pension as they plan their retirement in a period of record household debt and declining stock markets; (c) take immediate action to fix the crumbling infrastructure essential to our economy and the security of Canadians; and (d) maintain the full public sector contribution to the Canadian economy so as to take advantage of low interest rates, undertake strategic public investments, increase Canada's competitiveness, avert another serious recession and create jobs in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to introduce the first opposition day motion in this parliamentary session.

Over the past few months, the Conservatives have continued to boast about Canada's economic recovery, even in the face of economic turmoil abroad and stagnating growth here at home.

[Translation]

Canadians know that the government's assurances do not reflect reality. We have lost far too many good quality jobs that made it possible for families to make ends meet. Canadian families' budgets are becoming tighter and tighter because of debt. Furthermore, international economic stability and the very slow economic growth are threatening to plunge us into a new recession.

The primary economic problem facing Canadians right now is not government debt, but slow recovery and the weak job market. The Conservatives' plan to cut spending will make the situation worse instead of better.

[English]

We, in the official opposition, know that now is the time to make strategic investments to promote economic growth and attack the real deficit: the jobs deficit. Canadians are tired of talk. What we need now is action. The Conservative government must reconsider its failed approach of something for nothing corporate tax and spending cuts and, instead, put in place a jobs plan, a plan that gets Canadians back to work.

[Translation]

The job market is currently more fragile than it was before the October 2008 crisis. The unemployment rate has risen to 7.3%, while the number of part-time workers and the number of workers looking for full-time employment has increased very rapidly. Quality, full-time jobs that allow families to make a living are very hard to find in every region of the country.

The actual unemployment rate, which includes discouraged workers who have left the labour force and part-time workers who would like to be working full-time, was 11.1% in July 2011, a very significant increase over the July 2008 rate of 9.4%.

[English]

In fact, despite the government's repeated boasting about its jobs record, close to 1.4 million Canadians remain unemployed. When people lose jobs, it is a tragedy for those individuals. When we include those who have become discouraged by weak job prospects or who are underemployed, that number rises to close to two million, two million individual tragedies. That is two million Canadians for whom the government's boasting is just a slap in the face.

● (1030)

[Translation]

The lack of progress in getting Canadians back to work is disappointing to say the least. If today the same proportion of Canadians were working as before the 2008 economic crisis, 420,000 more Canadians would have jobs.

[English]

The IMF recently predicted that Canada's unemployment rate will rise this year and that in 2012 our economy will grow far more slowly than anticipated.

To make matters worse, only 39.6% of the officially unemployed qualify for unemployment insurance, even if they had paid into the program themselves, which means that only two out of five Canadians are actually qualifying for the benefits that they have

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paid for, and only 26.8% of the real unemployed are covered by EI benefits. Canadians are facing both rising unemployment and decreasing EI coverage, adding insult to injury.

At the same time, household debt has hit record levels of 150%, leaving families struggling to make ends meet.

The government's lack of leadership on job creation has real economic costs. Our lower unemployment rate today represents lost wages alone of more than \$20 billion, not to mention the billions of dollars in economic stimulus and tax revenues that go along with them.

[Translation]

What is the result? Our economic growth has become stagnant. Economists in all areas have lowered their forecasts with regard to Canada's economic growth. The Conservatives' budget is thus based on growth projections that are no longer realistic.

[English]

The BMO deputy chief economist has noted that even if Canada and the U.S. avoid another recession, Ottawa will fall far short of the estimates for growth in the finance minister's last budget.

The Conservatives claim that the solution to all of this is simply more of the same failed policy of no strings attached tax cuts for the same wealthy corporations. However, with the money they have received in tax breaks, large corporations have invested outside of Canada, have paid themselves, their executives, exorbitant bonuses, and have moved good-paying, quality Canadian jobs overseas. Canadian corporations today are sitting on \$500 billion, \$120 billion of which is through corporate tax cuts, at a time when the economy is in dire need of investment.

Instead of excusing itself because we are doing better than sicker economies in the G8, the government must put in place policies that encourage private sector investment in our economy here at home. If we want others to express confidence in the economy, we must take the lead by investing in the economy, not by cutting billions of dollars in public spending. Economists agree that it is the wrong time to take money out of the economy.

Doug Porter of BMO told the finance committee this week that recent drops in government bond yield rates are a sign that financial markets are stressed about economic growth prospects, not government deficits or inflation.

The Conference Board of Canada has also emphasized that this is not the time to put the brakes on government spending and government investment. Instead, the government must be willing to step back and consider its approach in response to economic reality.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

The Canadian economy is facing serious economic risks as a result of our dependence on American and European markets. The American economy remains extremely weak as a result of the flat housing market, high debt levels and the change from a program involving weak recovery measures to one involving budget cuts.

Fear of a double-dip recession has caused a sharp drop in the stock market over the past few months. The OECD and the IMF are predicting a very slow recovery for developed economies, which will have a major impact on Canadian exports.

TD Economics has indicated that, while the United States should be able to avoid a recession in 2011, any unpredicted drop in the markets could plunge Canada into another recession. Scotiabank economists have stated that we are facing a very real possibility that the Canadian economy could be the first to fall into a recession.

● (1035)

[English]

The government must be willing to be flexible and must consider its planned spending cuts in light of global economic instability. However, despite the fragile global economy and Canada's shaky economic recovery, the Conservatives want to cut off all stimulus and cut tens of billions of dollars out of the economy.

Radical spending cuts, even before the private sector is prepared to start investing again, hurts Canadian families and Canadian communities.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada has made it clear that this is no for undercutting demand in the economy. That is why he is keeping interest rates low.

[Translation]

In the past, the ability of Stephen Harper's Conservatives to predict Canada's economic future has been appalling.

The Deputy Speaker: I must briefly interrupt the member. We do not refer to other members of the House by their name.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Pardon me, Madam Speaker.

If we look back at what this government did in 2008, it seems to have a habit of letting things deteriorate before taking action. We need measures, we need a job creation plan, and we need these things now.

[English]

Today the opposition calls upon the government to take immediate action to: promote job creation; ensure that all Canadians can rely on a stable retirement future; undertake strategic investments to fix the crumbling infrastructure essential to our economy and the security of Canadians; and maintain the full public sector contribution to the Canadian economy in order to increase Canada's competitiveness and divert another recession.

The total Canadian net government debt is 33.7% of GDP compared to an OECD average of 62.6%. That is about half. Interest rates are at historic lows and money costs much less. This provides an opportunity to make strategic investments in jobs and infrastructure, which are sorely needed. The Toronto Board of Trade

emphasizes that a strong infrastructure foundation is a top priority in ensuring economic competitiveness now and into the future. In fact, the OECD has concluded that Toronto's lack of transportation infrastructure is a leading drag on the region's global competitiveness.

We are not just talking about spending but also about investing. There is a difference. We need to express confidence in Canada's economy and attract private sector investment by investing in targeted incentives for the real job creators. With respect to critical public infrastructure and initiatives, we need to invest in roads, bridges, public transit, and broadband Internet, greening the economy, ensuring first nations have potable water in every community, training workers for the new economy, housing, and early childhood education.

The Department of Finance recognizes that infrastructure investment has more than five times the economic impact that corporate income tax cuts have. This fact was published in an appendix to the 2009 budget. Canadians want action on job creation and real economic growth, not billions of dollars in corporate tax giveaways and cuts to services. Economists agree. Now is not the time to cut billions of dollars out of the economy. Strategic investment is required to support job creation and economic growth now and into the future.

New Democrats believe the best way to improve our economy and address our debt is through policies that would get Canadians back to work. This is no time to retrench. It is time for public investment. We can express confidence in the Canadian economy by undertaking the significant investments in infrastructure that are necessary for Canada to remain competitive in the future economy.

● (1040)

[Translation]

We all know that jobs are the key to a stable economy. We need to stop politicizing the situation. What we need to be doing right now is putting aside party differences and working together to find pragmatic solutions that encourage job creation, economic productivity and investments that will increase the expertise of our Canadian workers.

[English]

These solutions would include a new employee tax credit for employers who retain new hires for a year or more and a reduction in taxes for small businesses, not large corporations. It is small businesses that invest in job creation here at home. That is why we are urging the government to drop the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. That two percentage point tax break would help create jobs and growth right here in our communities.

[Translation]

We need a 21st-century energy strategy, but the Conservatives keep opting for an outdated approach. Canada will not progress if it continues to focus on developing gas and oil instead of clean technology, and that is going to harm both the environment and Canada's economy. It is time to build the economy of the future by investing in green infrastructure so that renewable energy is accessible throughout the country.

[English]

The official opposition rises today to call upon the government to put politics aside and focus more on the horizon and less on drawing lines in the sand. It must take immediate action to put Canadians back to work to grow our economy now and into the future.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments from the member opposite. At different points she talked about encouraging private investment and encouraging investment in public infrastructure. I would remind the member and her party that there has never been a time in Canadian history where more investment has gone into public infrastructure than in the past number of years since our government took office.

Regarding private sector investment, we have introduced a number of initiatives to encourage that, including the accelerated capital cost allowance. It makes a huge difference by allowing companies to invest in critical infrastructure that would help them improve their efficiency and help them remain competitive internationally.

We have also introduced the EI credit which provides small businesses with a credit when hiring.

With regard to business tax reductions, I understand there are a number of NDP members in Windsor, so perhaps the following quote from *The Windsor Star* would be helpful to the member and her party:

In short, all the evidence suggests corporate tax cuts lead to jobs and investment...

The government should push forward with lower taxes for businesses. Why would the NDP not want Canadian businesses to invest and create more jobs for Canadians who really want to work?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Madam Speaker, I respectfully ask the member to show us the evidence because we have not seen any. We have seen that unemployment is not as bad as it was at the depth of the recession. That is only because the opposition forced the Conservatives, who were sleepwalking into a recession, to invest in the economy.

It is very nice that members have built gazebos in their ridings. That is all well and good, but we are talking about strategic infrastructure investment such as urban transit and greening the economy. We are talking about investments that will make our economy more competitive, more productive and most importantly will put Canadians back to work.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very important that we are clear on the point that there one-quarter million more unemployed people today in Canada

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than when the Conservative government took office. From day one that party has been saying the issue is jobs, jobs, jobs.

I look at the buy American provisions that have been put into place. The government has dropped the ball. Liberals recognize the value and importance of trade. However, the NDP in Ontario is now advocating a buy Ontario policy.

I would like to know what the federal NDP's policy is on the buy American provisions. Do NDP members believe, as Liberals do, that we need to free up trade? Trade creates thousands of jobs every year. Do they support free trade or do the NDP members agree with their Ontario counterparts who say there should be a buy Ontario policy?

• (1045)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Madam Speaker, obviously Canada is a trading nation. We support our trading partners and believe trade is an important part of our economy. Approximately 70% to 75% of our exports go to the U.S.

We believe in fair trade, that which has a level playing field, not the kind of trade that allows Americans to out negotiate Conservative negotiators, or that protects American jobs while leaving ours vulnerable. We have seen the outcome of that, which was the loss of thousands of good manufacturing jobs in this country.

When will the government stand up for good quality jobs? When will it stop the migration of these jobs south of the border or to other parts of the world? When will it defend good quality Canadian jobs?

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Parkdale—High Park on her realistic assessment of the state of the Canadian economy. She put forth realistic and achievable goals of what is required to create jobs.

She pointed out that investing in infrastructure has five times the impact and benefit than corporate tax cuts have. One of those infrastructure issues is housing. What better way is there to meet a social need and provide high quality, good paying jobs than to use Canadian lumber to build houses? There is a growing crisis in many cities, that being the lack of affordable housing?

I ask the member to expand on the need for housing as a job stimulant and how that is good for society overall.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Madam Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada released a report last week stating that the Canadian economy is producing a more unequal society wherein the rich are getting richer and the middle class is falling further behind. One reason for that is the lack of affordable housing.

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We have a perfect opportunity. Interest rates are at almost historic lows. There is a tremendous need for affordable housing. Almost two million Canadians are looking for work. Let us put those together. Let us invest in affordable housing that is energy efficient, that helps meet Canadian housing needs and puts Canadians to work. That would also help grow our economy.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I listened to the member's speech I heard over and over again about what is wrong in the country. Therefore, I will point out what leading economists have said with respect to Canada's economy.

Senior BMO economist Sal Guatieri pointed out that Canada is in a much better situation than many countries and that our government has a much smaller budget deficit. That is critical in light of the global scene right now.

The senior vice-president and chief economist of the Scotiabank group said, "Canada is the best place to be and almost everything I look at screams that out to me". That was taken from *The Journal of Commerce*.

I hear this rhetoric all the time about how badly we are doing in Canada. However, the leading economists say that we are doing very well.

Manitoba NDP minister of finance Rosann Wowchuk has said, "...if the federal government reduces corporate taxes, it will make a difference for our businesses and certainly they will take advantage of those cuts".

As well, others from the member's own party have agreed that our government is doing a great job.

How does the member square what she is saying here in the House of Commons with what the leading economists are saying?

• (1050)

Mrs. Peggy Nash: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her fine work and her question.

It is absolutely correct that our deficit and debt situation is not as bad as it is in other countries. In fact, it is much better than it is in other countries in the G8. Therefore, why is the Minister of Finance focused on deficit reduction as though that were our main problem? That is exactly the point.

The issue for us, the major challenge, is not the debt in this country; it is job creation. I am sure she knows that in her community, youth unemployment is double the unemployment of others in this country, and I am sure she knows the problems that leads to. We do not want to be locking up young people, putting them in jail, having to build more prisons, which, sadly, the government is heading toward. We want to create good quality jobs for our youth so that they can have a hopeful future. That is what we in the NDP are standing up for: Canadian youth and families.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to once again discuss our government's priority, which is the economy and job creation.

[English]

I thank the Speaker for the opportunity to speak today on this very odd motion brought forward by the NDP.

I say "odd" because in it the NDP talks about its alleged concern about jobs, pensions, infrastructure and the economy. I say "alleged" because when it matters most, when the NDP actually has to vote on legislation or a budget that supports jobs, pensions, infrastructure and the economy, the NDP has always voted against.

Every single time, at every opportunity, the NDP has been a negative and ideologically rigid force voting against Canada's economic plan and its next phase. Indeed, let us only go back a few months to when our Conservative government introduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

This is a positive plan for jobs and economic growth. It is focused on helping to boost the economy and on helping families during these turbulent economic times by flowing \$1 billion in federal funding to provinces and territories for infrastructure projects in 2011-12; helping manufacturers by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for two years; extending the eco-energy retrofit program to help create more energy efficient homes while generating local economic activity; renewing EI pilot projects, which would help the unemployed; extending work-sharing agreements to help protect jobs; creating a hiring credit for small business to help create jobs; and many more positive measures.

This is a plan that economists, business organizations, public interest groups and commentators applauded as a positive plan to create jobs and promote economic growth.

Indeed, let us listen to what some of them have actually said, because I listened to my colleague moments ago make up facts about what she suggests was said. I am going read the actual quotes so that there is absolutely no question in Canadians' minds about what was actually said.

Let us listen to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, who said it was:

....critical to sustaining Canada's economic recovery.

What about the Certified Management Accountants of Canada? This group said it will:

....contribute to keeping Canada globally competitive and ensuring that the private sector can fully contribute to economic growth and job creation.

Better yet, let us listen to what Canadians said on May 2, when they spoke with their ballots and elected a strong and stable national majority Conservative government to implement that plan.

However, the NDP ignored the experts, ignored the priorities of Canadians for jobs and growth, and decided to vote against the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, as it did at the height of the global economic recession, which the NDP seems to forget occurred when it opposed Canada's economic action plan. The NDP said "no" yet again and showed the type of rigid economic ideological thinking that Canadians do not need.

In doing that, the NDP also voted against a plan to support jobs and the economy, a plan that has worked, a plan that has in fact helped Canada's economy remain the most envied in the entire industrialized world during the turbulent economic times that we face.

Members need not take my word for it. Let us listen to some more quotes. Let us listen to Scotiabank economist Warren Jestin, who recently commented:

If you want to live anywhere in the world in today's global economy, Canada is the place you want to be.

What about Queen's University economics professor Tom Courchene? He stated:

It is true that we are in excellent financial and fiscal shape if you compare us with any of our trading partners...

I know the NDP likes to twist the facts, often for the sole purpose of talking down the Canadian economy and belittling Canada's economic leadership on the world stage, so I want to get some plain, indisputable facts on the table for the NDP and Canadians at home to dispel some of this absolute misinformation perpetrated by the NDP. These are facts from well-recognized and independent sources that Canadians can verify for themselves online, something that I challenge the NDP to do here today.

Here is the first fact: both the IMF and the OECD project that Canada will have among the strongest rates of economic growth in the G7 in the years ahead.

Here is another fact: Canada has created nearly 600,000 new jobs since July 2009, with over 80% of them being full time. That is the strongest job creation record in the G7.

• (1055)

Fact: For the fourth straight year, the World Economic Forum rated our banking system the world's best.

Fact: According to the IMF, Canada has, and will continue to have, by far the lowest total government net debt to GDP ratio in the entire G7.

Fact: Unlike the case with other countries, Canada's credit rating has recently been renewed at the best level by major agencies. Indeed, Moody's recently renewed Canada's AAA credit rating, praising our "...economic resiliency, very high government financial strength and a low susceptibility to event risk".

Another fact is that our Conservative government's economic leadership has been repeatedly praised by everyone from economists to global leaders. Here is what BMO economist Doug Porter actually said in the finance committee the other day. Again, this is a quote, not a paraphrase, not a change or a twist of facts; these are his actual words:

Compared to policy-making in the rest of the world, Canada's economic policy-making has been exemplary. I don't think there's been a significant misstep in recent years.

This is what British Prime Minister David Cameron said in this very House only last week:

In the last few years, Canada has got every major decision right. Look at the facts. Not a single Canadian bank fell or faltered during the global banking crisis. Canada got to grips with its deficit and was running surpluses and paying down the debt before the recession, fixing the roof while the sun was shining. Your economic

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leadership has helped the Canadian economy to weather the global storms far better than many of your international competitors.

While the global economy may be turbulent and while too many Canadians are looking for work, Canadians can rest assured that our Conservative government has done, and will continue to do, everything possible to ensure we are in the best position to meet the challenges ahead. That is what Canadians want their government to do: stay focused on jobs and the economy, keep taxes low and respect their hard-earned tax dollars.

Our Conservative government gets that, and Canadians understand that we get that. That is why they gave us a majority government.

For instance, we, like Canadians, understand that small businesses are the heartbeat of the Canadian economy, and by helping them grow, we are helping create jobs in our local communities. That is why, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we introduced a hiring credit for small business. This innovative job-creating measure will help an estimated 525,000 small businesses by giving them a leg up to expand and increase hiring.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business labelled it an important step "...to enhance job creation and recognize the economic contributions of small businesses in Canada".

The NDP members, though, despite what they say today, actually voted against helping small businesses create jobs. That should not come as a great surprise, for the NDP has a very different take on the economy compared to our Conservative government.

While we are committed to a low-tax plan to help the economy and to help both large and small employers grow, the NDP believes in a tired tax-and-spend philosophy for the Canadian economy. The NDP believes in a far-left economic philosophy that claims Canadian families and businesses are just not paying enough taxes and need to send more of their hard-earned money to big government in Ottawa.

In fact the Liberal finance critic, the member for Kings—Hants, publicly proclaimed to the *The Chronicle-Herald* newspaper this past year that Canadians should be wary of the Marxist-Leninist views of the federal NDP when it comes to the economy.

While I will not repeat that sentiment completely, I will again point to some facts on the NDP's record on taxes for Canadians to consider.

First and foremost, unlike the NDP, our Conservative government believes that leaving more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians is the right thing to do, and we have the record to prove it.

Since coming to office in 2006, we have cut over 120 taxes, reducing taxes in every way government that collects them: personal, consumption, business, excise taxes and more. We removed over one million low-income Canadians completely from the tax rolls.

Business of Supply

● (1100)

We reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years. We introduced the tax free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since RRSPs. We lowered the GST from 7% to 5%. The overall total savings for a typical family is over \$3,000.

The NDP, on the other hand, has a proven record of pushing a high tax agenda by voting no again and again in the House of Commons against our tax relief. It has constantly protested and mocked our efforts to leave more money in the pockets of everyday Canadian families to help them pay the bills and to help businesses grow our economy.

Indeed, public statements by NDP MPs clearly underline their fundamental belief that Canadian families should be forced to send more and more of their hard-earned money to government. For example, here is what the NDP finance critic, the member for Parkdale—High Park, had to say about our government's GST reduction. She stated, "Cuts to the GST...take us in the wrong direction. I am very proud that our caucus stood opposed to that—".

Honestly, how many Canadians dealing with the costs of raising their families would appreciate politicians claiming that they are not just proud but very proud that they tried to prevent them from keeping more of their own hard-earned money? Is that the type of high tax thinking we want our politicians to have when it comes to the economy and protecting jobs? Clearly, the answer is a huge no.

As I mentioned earlier, Canada has weathered the global economic recession better than most other countries, but a big part of that has been our low tax plan, a low tax plan that has helped put an average of \$3,000 back in the pockets of an average Canadian family. Another aspect of that low tax plan involves leaving more money in the hands of entrepreneurs and businesses to grow and hire more Canadians. Lower taxes make our economy stronger and create good, long-term jobs for today and tomorrow.

The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters released a report, available online for all to see, confirming lower business taxes mean more jobs. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business unequivocally supports our low tax plan, which it says helps small business. Once again, I am using its words, "unequivocally supports".

Even our American neighbours have noticed it. Listen to what Iowa Governor Terry Branstad told NBC's *Meet the Press* only last month. He stated:

The Canadian government has reduced their corporate income tax...I've had companies that I've called on in Chicago to come to Iowa, and they've said, "We like Iowa, but if they don't change the federal corporate income tax, we're probably going to go to Canada". Now, that's a tragedy when...Canada is now beating us.

Without a doubt, our Conservative government is focused on keeping taxes low and helping create jobs. The NDP wants to raise taxes, which essentially kills jobs. Specifically, as businesses try to deal with global economic turbulence, the NDP wants to slap a huge \$10 billion a year tax hike on them as explicitly stated in its platform.

Let us be clear. A \$10 billion a year NDP tax hike would mean losing good Canadian jobs and jeopardizing the financial security of

hard-working Canadian families. I do not know what world the NDP is living in, but Canadians cannot afford that. They cannot afford higher taxes and they cannot afford the job killing policies of the NDP. The member for Parkdale—High Park may be very proud of the NDP supporting tax hikes, but Canadians are actually very scared.

When it comes to taxes and the economy, our Conservative government's record is clear: lower taxes for a stronger economy. That is what we need. The NDP record is even clearer, higher taxes and more reckless spending, something we do not need.

Moreover, unlike the NDP and this hastily thrown together motion on the economy today, our Conservative government has a well-developed plan for jobs and growth that we have been implementing. Canada's economic action plan and its next phase is that plan. Despite the fact that the NDP voted against it every step of the way, this plan is working and it is getting results. Yes, like other countries, we face global economic headwinds from Europe and the United States, but we are ready and able to address them as we have done so previously.

● (1105)

I would, therefore, encourage all members to stick with the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. Do not listen to the misinformation that is being perpetrated. Look at the facts. As I have challenged the NDP here today, put the facts on the table.

I encourage Canadians to listen to the economists, to global leaders, and to Canadians, when they say, this is the plan to follow, this will keep our country safe, this will protect jobs, and this will create jobs. I encourage them to remain on track with this Conservative government in the interests of this wonderful country of Canada.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think that what we have seen here on display is a kind of a sad partisan approach to something that Canadians really expect us to work together on. Two-thirds of Canadians did not vote for the current government. They are really asking, "What is the government's plan?"

We are saying we have a plan to put Canadians back to work, the two million Canadians who are desperate for a job. I think they expect us to get to work on that, to roll up our sleeves and get to work. The average Canadian family benefits by about \$16,000 from the services that they get from various levels of government. All we are proposing is that the government turn its attention to real job creation.

Scotiabank says that Canada may well be the first of the G8 countries to fall into a recession because we are a large trading nation, and that is of real concern to Canadians. Of course, companies would love more tax cuts. They would not argue against them. However, the fact is they are sitting on \$500 billion in cash.

I ask the hon. member, why would she want to add to that \$5 billion? Why would she not want to invest that money and put Canadians back to work?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I apologize, but I believe my colleague got some of the numbers mixed up. One moment she said it was \$500 billion and the next moment she said it was \$5 billion. So, I am not quite sure what number she is going to go with. The NDP seems to come up with these numbers from thin area. However, let me give the appropriate numbers.

There have been nearly 600,000 jobs created under this government's watch since the recession hit. This government is committed to ensuring we protect Canadian jobs, ensuring we create Canadian jobs. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan has been put forward in an effort to move that forward.

I need to remind this House of what Catherine Swift, president and CEO of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, stated when discussing one of the NDP's proposals to double CPP premiums in its efforts to protect jobs. Here is what Catherine Swift in fact said, "That would mean probably about a 60% to 70% increase in premiums from what we understand, and that was very, very worrisome. So any tax breaks that were in the NDP platform were grossly outmatched but what they were going to ding small business on that CPP alone".

However, she does not talk about the \$10 billion tax hike that is going to kill jobs. She does not talk about the fact the NDP wants to raise the GST, and on and on.

I will take another question and address, once again, the great efforts by this government as we move forward on this great economic action plan venture.

• (1110)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a matter of arithmetic that the latest budget, budget 2011, is a net destroyer of jobs. If we actually look at the numbers in the budget, on the spending side the Conservatives have measures worth \$500 million over two years, or only \$200 million if we exclude the \$300 million given to AECL. So, the measures that they keep boasting about are \$200 million to \$500 million.

Turn a few pages in the budget and we get to the cuts. What are the cuts over these same two years? Two billion dollars. They are cutting \$2 billion and they are adding \$200 million to \$500 million so, obviously, net, they are destroying more jobs than they are creating.

This is wrong-headed at this time. If we look to what the IMF has said, if we look to what the chief economist of BMO has said, it is not appropriate to destroy jobs at a time when the world economy is likely heading back into a recession.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is, how can she possibly justify budget 2011 which destroys far more jobs than it creates?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and I respect the way he is doing his math, but I do not agree with it.

Business of Supply

When doing calculations, one cannot just take little bits and pieces from a calculation to force the answer to agree with what one's political position is. One has to look at the document and the hiring credit for small businesses that would create jobs. Look at what we are doing for the manufacturing sector that has, unfortunately, suffered. We are the party that is trying to help it by extending its accelerated capital cost allowance for two more years. We are also increasing funding for the National Research Council's industrial research assistance program. This is something we believe will help us move forward to create more jobs.

If one looks at the document that we have put before Parliament, it has measures to help seniors, families and businesses. It has measures to help every sector to move forward. It is going to protect and create jobs.

We are not immune from other factors outside our borders, but we have a plan that would get us through. We are the envy of the world and we are going to stick to that plan.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for a very well thought out and explained reaction to this bizarre motion that we are dealing with today. I am not quite sure whether NDP economic policy reflects Karl Marx or Groucho Marx.

If we had gone the route that the NDP is suggesting and significantly increased debt and spending, would we not very much be in the same kind of crisis that we see many European countries in today? Would that not be very wrong-headed for Canada?

• (1115)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my new colleague, who has been working very hard on this very issue, and he is absolutely right.

When we look at the global economy and what has happened outside of our borders in Europe and the United States, we see that they are in a debt crisis. It is exactly what the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, had to say in this House last week. They are in a debt crisis because they have overspent. They need to create jobs and bolster their economies. We are glad to see that today there has been an agreement among European nations to move forward with some plans to address some of these problems.

If we were to raise taxes, as suggested by the official opposition, the NDP, a \$10 billion tax hike on our businesses would be passed along by way of job cuts, by way of increased prices for consumers, and Canadians would suffer. If we were to raise the GST, the same thing would happen. It is not the time to be raising taxes on Canadians in this very turbulent economic time.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I must come back to the issue of tax cuts for large corporations. I wonder if my colleague across the floor could comment on the fact that the liquid assets of large corporations seem to be increasing, yet investments are stagnating. Does this not illustrate just how ineffective tax cuts to large corporations are?

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Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I do not expect him to take the parliamentary secretary's word alone as proof. I would like to read my colleague a quote from the Conseil du patronat du Québec on the issue he just mentioned:

We believe that the federal government's budget 2011-2012 is a responsible plan that stays on course regarding orientations announced in the previous years.... The tax cuts for businesses already planned are not questioned, which should encourage private investments in our country, ones that are needed.

This budget creates an environment that promotes economic development without reducing transfers to individuals, businesses or other governments, and without raising taxes or tariffs...

This press release was issued by the council on March 22, 2011. The hon. member is from Quebec and he should listen to the Conseil du patronat du Québec.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I stand today to speak to the motion put forward by the member for Parkdale—High Park. I will be sharing my time with my excellent colleague, the member for York West, who also serves as the Liberal critic for seniors and pensions.

[Translation]

The motion calls on the government to adopt a real plan to promote job creation, to take immediate action to fix the crumbling infrastructure and to maintain the full public sector contribution to the Canadian economy so as to avert another serious recession.

[English]

Time and again, we hear the Conservatives bragging about the job situation in Canada. It shows how out of touch they are with many Canadians. Under the Conservatives, unemployment is actually up. In fact, it is harder to find a job today than it was when the Conservatives first took office. That is because, under the Conservatives, job creation in Canada is simply not keeping up with our population growth.

Today, 1.4 million Canadians are out of work and looking for a job. That is 344,000 more unemployed Canadians compared with just before the recession. That is 213,000 more unemployed Canadians than when the Conservatives first took office. Canada's unemployment rate is now 7.3% and that does not include the thousands of Canadians who have simply given up looking for work. We do not see any real plan from the Conservatives to create jobs.

Our national employment figures also do not tell the whole story. If we go into regions of the country, for instance the Maritimes and Ontario and Quebec, we see a very different picture from what we see in resource-rich provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta.

As an example, let us look at London, Ontario, which is an area represented by both Conservative and NDP members of Parliament. In London, there are 6,800 fewer net jobs now compared with before the recession. There are 10,700 more people out of work and the unemployment rate is now 9.3%. That is almost three points higher than it was before the recession. Yet, we hear the Conservatives telling these unemployed Canadians that everything is fine, when, in fact, unemployed Canadians and their families are suffering and struggling.

In my own economic region of the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, the counties of Hants, Kings and Annapolis are represented by me as a Liberal member of Parliament and by the member for West Nova, a Conservative member of Parliament. This Statistics Canada catchment area has 5,500 fewer net jobs today compared with before the recession in 2008. There are now 2,200 more people who are unemployed and looking for work and the local unemployment rate has gone from 5% to almost 9%. In regions like these, too many Canadians have lost full-time jobs and have seen their full-time jobs, in many cases, replaced by part-time work. It is hard to pay bills, put food on the table, take care of a family or save for retirement or university or college for their children with part-time work and no benefits.

One way Canadians have tried to make ends meet is to extend credit lines. Now the average Canadian family owes more than \$1.50 for every dollar of annual income. People are feeling squeezed and that is with interest rates at historic lows. They are scared to death to think of what will happen when interest rates inevitably, in time, increase. That is a reality faced by too many Canadians. What is taking place under the Conservatives' watch is that this situation is getting worse and the Conservatives are become more out of touch with reality.

The Conservatives are putting our economy and the jobs of Canadians at even more risk with their new-found ideological attachment to austerity measures. The Conservatives are doing this, despite the advice they are getting from the experts.

Dr. Sherry Cooper is the chief economist at BMO Capital Markets. Earlier this week, she scolded the Conservative government, when she said that its:

...misplaced belief that the road to economic prosperity is paved by near-term fiscal tightening, as espoused by...[the] Prime Minister...shows we have learned nothing from Herbert Hoover's response to the Great Depression.

Because of the Conservatives' stubbornness and misguided approach, Dr. Cooper writes that we are:

...we are in danger of repeating the deflationary policies that caused the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression.

Instead, she called for counter-cyclical fiscal policy, while what the Conservatives are doing, which I guess is the only thing we can call it, is a counter-Keynesian fiscal policy. It is not just that the Conservatives are ignoring the advice of the economists. They are doing exactly the opposite of what the economists are calling for during these tough times.

I sit with the member of Parliament for Markham—Unionville who is a former bank economist with the Royal Bank of Canada. He and his colleagues globally agree that it is a mistake right now, during a perilous economic time when the demand simply is not there to fuel growth, for governments to actually cut spending and reduce demand.

• (1120)

It is interesting that in the first three years of office, the Conservatives actually increased spending by 18%, three times the rate of inflation, and they put Canada into deficit with their massive spending increases even before the recession began. During the good times, when the market was providing all kinds of growth for the Canadian economy, the Conservatives were spending. Now, during the tough times, when the market is contracting and investments are drying up, the Conservatives are cutting. It makes no sense and there is no economist who agrees with what they are doing.

The Conservatives spent the cupboard bare during the good times and they eliminated the rainy day fund that was set aside by the previous Liberal government. They wasted taxpayer money on everything from partisan advertising and high-priced consultants, to the G8 and G20 billion dollar boondoggle and now, with the economy teetering on the edge of a recession, the Conservatives finally have discovered austerity. This approach ramping up spending in the good times and cutting spending when Canadians are out work is wrong-headed.

As *The Economist* magazine September 10 edition says:

The immediate priority should be supporting demand—or at least not doing harm to it. ...the main cause of the current high joblessness is the severity of the last recession and the weakness of the subsequent recovery. ... But the main culprit is a collective, premature shift to fiscal austerity by governments.

It noted further:

Some forms of stimulus are better than others at supporting employment. Some infrastructure spending, such as building roads and repairing schools.... So do tax incentives that cut the cost of hiring, particularly for extra new workers....

All of that makes sense. I noticed that it did not mention fake lakes as an appropriate stimulus investment.

Here in Canada, the Conservatives have done the opposite of what the economists are saying. They are actually putting Canada at risk and making the situation we are facing worse. Instead of reducing payroll taxes, a known job-killer, last January the Conservatives actually increased payroll taxes and they did this at a time of high unemployment with 1.5 million Canadians already out of work.

The Conservative government is ignoring the fact that, with its austerity policies, it is making it harder for out-of-work Canadians to find a job. The government ignores that increasing payroll taxes and increasing the cost of hiring new workers is actually contributing to Canada's stubbornly high unemployment rates.

Now, at a time when the economy is weakening and consumer confidence is at its lowest since at the depths of the last recession, the Conservatives want to cut public investments and take money out of the economy. The Liberal Party believes that with the economy on the brink of another recession now is not the time to cut public investment and take money out of the economy.

There is a difference between the Liberal position and the NDP position when it comes to expenditure review. We support the concept of public expenditure review, particularly in times of economic growth when public expenditure cuts can be conducted without hurting the economy or the loss of significant numbers of jobs for Canadians.

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At the cabinet expenditure review committee, part of Paul Martin's government, when the member for Markham—Unionville was chair of the committee, we identified \$11 billion of savings. We did this as ministers by examining each line item of public spending throughout agencies and departments. Unlike the Conservatives, we did not outsource our responsibilities as ministers to high priced consultants at \$90,000 a day. We took the process seriously. We were totally accountable and we did it with the support of the public service in an open and transparent manner. We published a detailed breakdown and explanation of the savings on a website for all Canadians to see. Again, we did this so that taxpayer money could be reinvested in priorities, including health care and infrastructure. We were able to sign a deal with the Canadian provinces, the largest single investment of federal money into health care in the history of Canada, of \$41 billion in 2004.

We differ with the NDP on some other issues, including trade. We differ with the NDP in terms of public-private partnerships and the capacity to renew infrastructure, but we do agree broadly—

• (1125)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must call the member to order.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to probe my colleague's comments about a review of public expenditures. I am sure he knows that the New Democrats are supporting the ongoing review of public expenditures to ensure that our money is well spent.

What we find challenging is that the government has suddenly picked a figure of \$4 billion out of thin air and now it is hiring an outside company for \$90,000 a day to somehow justify what it should be doing on an ongoing basis, which is ensuring that Canadians get good value for their tax dollars.

Would the member agree that this is just part of the responsibility of being in government, as opposed to having it contracted out to some outside firm?

• (1130)

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, before I answer the member's question, I will say that her motion today is quite a reasonable one. While we may have some differences with the NDP on the use of private capital and expertise in terms of infrastructure investments, in terms of trade policy and on several other economic issues, this motion is a very centrist and sensible motion, and I thank her for that.

In terms of the NDP position on expenditure review, I can remember when we were in government, I can remember serving on that committee and I can remember the NDP not being favourable toward that expenditure review process at that time.

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The reality is that there is a responsibility for government on an ongoing basis to respect tax dollars, but the challenge we have right now with the government's approach to expenditure review when we are teetering on the edge of recession is that it can actually push Canada over the line into recession with just one more quarter of negative growth.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the member for Kings—Hants but I do not think I heard whether the official position of the Liberals will be to support this motion or not.

Maybe the member would take this opportunity to be quite clear with the House on whether this is the start of the Liberal-NDP coalition on motions in this House or whether the Liberal Party will be voting against this motion?

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I would urge someone in the House to give the member a new earpiece because his obviously is not working. I did say that we will be supporting the motion today. For instance, we do believe, as a Liberal Party, that investments in infrastructure now would be timely and that modernizing transportation and energy infrastructure in Canada makes a lot of sense.

We would differ, quite possibly, with the NDP in terms of where some of that capital would come from. We believe that CPP, AIMCo, OMERS, the teachers pension plan and private equity capital can be used to invest in public-private partnerships to facilitate that, along with public money.

However, we do support this motion, which is what I said at least twice during my remarks.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance bragged about the Conservative government taking a million people off the tax rolls.

I noticed that we have a one-quarter million more people unemployed. So, I know how some of those people got off the tax rolls.

Does the member for Kings—Hants think that the Conservative government is on track to take more people off the tax rolls in this way?

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, the member, an exceptional new member to this House, I may add, with a strong economic and finance background, has raised a good point.

Many of the Canadians who have been taken off the tax rolls by the Conservatives have been taken off the tax rolls because they lost their full-time jobs and they are struggling. In fact, unemployment is higher than it was three years ago. There are more Canadians looking for work and there are more Canadians struggling to make ends meet. If that is the way Conservatives want to take people off the tax rolls, the Liberal Party certainly does not support that.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to join in this important debate. I congratulate New Democrats for bringing this important issue forward. There are a variety of things to touch on, but overall it is one of the issues that we all care about, whether it is pensions, or infrastructure investments, or the economy. We will continue to work on behalf of all Canadians to bring these kinds of issues forward.

Given the urgency and the importance of the subject, I would have liked to have seen more time devoted to pensions, an issue that I have been involved in for a couple of years now as the pension critic. I look forward to finding ways to improve Canadians' retirement years. The clock is ticking on this issue, and if the government fails to act, which is clearly what we have seen so far, then it may be too late to avoid many of the problems that our aging population will have to face.

Pension security, coverage and adequacy are issues that I have worked on for a while. Last May in the House, I prompted a take note debate on pension security, hoping the government would take notice and act on the looming pension crisis.

Why have I been pushing this? Not only because I am the critic, but because Canada is a nation rich with resources and potential and our citizens should be able to enjoy a measure of dignity during retirement. I have a weekly meeting in my office with seniors who are struggling, and it is quite a shock to realize how little they have to live on.

More than 200,000 Canadians over the age of 65 continue to live below the poverty line. What that really means is that after a lifetime of working to raise their family, paying their taxes, 200,000 Canadians are being forced to choose between buying groceries or paying the rent because their retirement income is simply too low to allow them to do both. This covers a lot of people, whether it is a woman who chooses to stay at home to raise her children or someone caring for an elderly relative. A variety of people have been caught in a certain portion. In the last election, the government introduced a bit of help, but that only covered a small amount of people. People going into retirement are thinking they are going to have a blissful life, but they are clearly finding out that living on \$14,000 a year is a difficult struggle.

In response, the daily goal that should be set by the present government, or any other Government of Canada for that matter, is to eliminate that wrong.

How do we do that? For a start, we need to get serious about pension security, coverage and adequacy before we see more situations such as the one which is still threatening 17,000 former employees of Nortel. The House spent a lot of time last year talking about it. As the opposition, we asked a lot of questions. Many Nortel employees continue to struggle. Those 17,000 people worked for a lifetime, paid their taxes, put money away for a rainy day, but despite all of their efforts, they saw their savings wash away because of inadequate legal protections in our system. They were promised action, but the government continues to ignore these important people and their financial security. Thousands of others in Canada could be threatened in the event that a company goes bankrupt and they have no pension protection.

Historically speaking, prior to the Great Depression, most Canadian social services were delivered by a patchwork group of religious, volunteer and charitable organizations. The reality is that today, in addition to being essential for basic living, many Canadians view pensions as defining elements of our national identity.

In 1927 Liberal prime minister Sir William Lyon Mackenzie King approved the old age pension plan. In 1963 Liberal prime minister Lester Pearson began working on the Canada pension plan. The Conservatives stood firmly in opposition to the idea of retirement income security for working Canadians, with the ideology that they could take care of themselves. Imagine where we would be today if we did not have old age security and, most important, if we did not have the Canada pension plan.

• (1135)

As I said earlier, the Conservative Party has a long history of opposing improvements to it. Conservatives opposed the Liberal old pension. They opposed the Liberal idea of the Canada pension plan. They opposed helping the former employees of Nortel, including pensioners.

The real sad part of it was that there was a group of Nortel employees on long-term disability. We had a bill before the House and the Senate that would have helped that small segment of people. However, the Conservatives brought in more Conservative senators and voted down that bill. It would have helped a small segment of people. One of the men who appeared before the committees of the House of Commons and the Senate several times died shortly after, a sad, desperate man. Today we continue to hear very little about real pension reform.

Where do we go from here? On October 13, 2010, I presented a white paper on pension reform and I sent a copy of it to the government, because it had a lot of good ideas. I imagine, if the Conservatives can distance themselves from the Liberals, they will try to implement some of them as long as they can take credit for it.

I want to see improvements done, and if the Conservatives pick up some of those comments in the white paper and move them forward, I am happy to congratulate them for doing so.

However, it is time again to see that kind of national leadership shown by Mackenzie King, Pearson and by Mr. Chrétien, who put the Canada pension plan back on a stable footing for nearly a century.

Most Canadian seniors are eligible for old age security and most former workers can receive Canada pension plan or the Quebec pension plan benefits, based on their contributions during the course of their careers. Those on the lowest end of the income scale are also eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. Alone, these mechanisms provide somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30% of one's replacement income in retirement.

In dollars, these plans pay a maximum of about \$20,000 annually, if we are lucky, but the average payouts continue to be significantly less. Current economics suggest that this will not be enough for most Canadians, who will need private retirement savings to survive.

A number of Canadians do have a private pension through their employer and take advantage of government tax shelters such as

RRSPs or tax-free savings accounts. However, recent events have called the security of these private investments into question. I believe, as Canadians, as parliamentarians, we can find better solutions.

In the past few years alone we have seen a number of private companies become insolvent. Once that occurs, it would seem that employee pension plans are inadequately protected under current Canadian law. When markets crash, things like Nortel happen.

Despite repeated calls for action, the government seems willing to sit back and allow the market to do as it will with these people. Again, the same ideology: let people take care of themselves.

The undeniable fact is that over the next 20 to 30 years, Canadian pension regimes will face a perfect storm of an aging population, longer lifespans, dramatically higher levels of personal debt coupled with lower disposable incomes and global, economic and market instability. Therefore, steps must be taken in the short term if pension security, adequacy and coverage are to be attainable in the long term for many Canadians.

In an effort to ensure that Canada's retirement income system is prepared for this challenge, I would suggest that adopting a multi-pronged, internally coherent strategy that would shore up our system would be mindful of several key principles.

First, we need to underscore the value of a functioning pension system, and I strongly feel that the reliable retirement income regime is in everyone's best interest.

Second, we should be rethinking the three pillars of the existing pension system.

Third, we should consider the integration of existing systems.

Consideration must also be given to those who have traditionally fallen through the cracks. In particular, women who statistically endure a greater rate of poverty due largely to factors involving longevity, employment type and tenure, must receive the attention needed to ensure retirement income security, adequacy and coverage on par with all Canadians.

With these principles in mind, my white paper proposes several specific recommendations to help ensure Canada's pension and retirement savings structures are fortified in a way so as to ensure they are prepared for the anticipated storm.

• (1140)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I remain somewhat confused by the speech of my colleague across the way from the Liberal Party. My confusion comes from some statements made by her colleagues, which I will quote.

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While my colleague from Kings—Hants indicated he intended to support more stimulus injection, his colleague from Markham—Unionville said, “Liberals are not calling on the government to stop its deficit reduction efforts, let alone engage in new stimulus spending”. I am a little confused about the two positions. However, I am also confused because the member for Kings—Hants clearly said in the *National Post*, on May 30, “Canadians remain skeptical of Liberals on the issue of economic management”.

As my colleague from the Liberal Party talks about a white paper and some suggestions, her own colleagues are telling Canadians not to trust their position on the economy. She may have a white paper, but I have a green paper that clearly includes those quotes, which can be searched on the website.

I would like her to answer the following question. Why on earth is she saying Canadians should follow her plan if, clearly, her colleagues do not believe in anything they—

● (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for York West.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, my white paper was a 27-page document that was sent to finance, with suggestions on pension reform, an area that I believe is of extreme importance, as I indicated earlier. If there is no long-term plan so Canadians can have a decent retirement, then we are letting them all down.

As far as our ability to balance cutting the budget and continuing to invest in infrastructure, in 1993, when we came into power, there was a \$42 billion deficit as a result of the Conservative government. We made the changes we needed to make and we made the hard decisions that were necessary. However, we are in a very unique time. There are severe problems around the world. Her government said that it would never run a deficit or get into a recession. Both of those things, we clearly know now, came true.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party certainly agree that we need to create retirement security for Canadians and we need to expand the Canada pension plan, which does not rely on tax dollars but on contributions that go directly into the plan by Canadians and employers.

Could the member tell us what her view is on the pooled pension plan idea offered by the government? What it would do, in our view, is once again throw the savings of seniors into the stock market, which makes financial planners wealthy but does nothing to provide for the retirement security of Canadians.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, the market is good and healthy if it has a lot of options, but clearly the option the government has put forward is an opportunity for insurance companies and banks to make money, which is great as this is free enterprise, but it will not help with the real problem.

Liberals have put forward the idea of a supplementary Canada pension plan that would allow people to put away a small amount of money. They can put \$50 a month into their supplementary plan and their employers, if they choose, could add a few extra dollars. Homemakers would be able to put a few extra dollars aside to try to catch up for the years they were not in the workforce.

A supplementary Canada pension plan would be voluntary. It would be run by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and would not require employers to add contributions, though they could if they wanted to. Otherwise, it would provide a safe vehicle that would be administered with low interest rates, would be well managed and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board indicated it could administer a supplementary plan with very little problem.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

I rise today to speak in favour of our party's opposition day motion which calls on the government to take swift action with regard to the economy. First, I would like to commend the member for Parkdale—High Park for all her hard work on this important issue.

As the Conservatives boast about their economic action plan, Canadian families know that times are still tough for them and they want the government to take meaningful action that gets them back to work. Rather than the billions of dollars in cuts to services and departments which the government is proposing, New Democrats believe that now is the time to provide targeted incentives for real job creators.

Even the Department of Finance has noted that infrastructure investment has more than five times the economic impact than corporate tax cuts. Yet, the government continues to follow unsustainable and unfair economic policies that have shown to be ineffective.

An excellent example of infrastructure investment which the government could do immediately is to work with provinces and municipalities to provide badly needed public transit systems. Communities across Canada are dealing with major shortfalls in transit funding.

New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody have been waiting for the Evergreen Line for over 20 years. It has been plagued by delays since the early 1990s. My community is one of the fastest growing regions in British Columbia with a high rate of commuters who travel to work. There is a severe lack of public transit. This infrastructure project is a necessary component for our long-term regional plan. Traffic congestion is a problem for many residents in my riding.

The Evergreen Line is expected to serve 70,000 people a day by 2021. Canada needs to transition toward a low-carbon future. The Evergreen Line is critical for my neighbourhood to meet future challenges associated with climate change and rising energy costs. The Evergreen Line is projected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air contaminants from cars by 4.7 million tonnes cumulatively by 2020.

One of the best things we can do for our economy is to invest in infrastructure projects that are needed to service our communities. The Evergreen Line would create approximately 9,000 construction jobs in my community. These jobs are needed now.

I call on the federal government to increase its investment in the Evergreen Line. The shortfall in funding falls on local taxpayers who are constantly being asked to pay more for vital infrastructure programs. It would be an excellent initiative for the federal government to increase its contribution to fund the gap and build the line.

The Evergreen Line is an example of why we need to adopt the New Democrats' proposed legislation that would create a national transit strategy in this country. The International Monetary Fund is predicting that unemployment will only continue to rise if swift action is not taken. Investing in public transit is an excellent way to create jobs and move us forward toward a sustainable future.

Small business is a major economic driver in Canada and in my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody. In Canada, over one million small businesses employ over 50% of the workforce.

The federal government must support small businesses because it has become increasingly evident that they are the ones investing in domestic job creation. Yet, the government continues to reward large corporations with tax cuts, which tend to ship their jobs overseas, and does not do enough for small businesses.

Canada's New Democrats have called on the federal government to reduce the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. This would help create jobs in communities right across the country. We also propose that employers who hire new employees get a tax credit.

• (1150)

Canada has a real opportunity to build the economy of the future by investing in vital green infrastructure. We also need to invest in research and technology.

The government continues to emphasize the expansion of oil and gas, while I believe we need to move into the 21st century and invest in a transition to cleaner technologies and energy supply. If we do not move forward with green energy and technology, I fear Canada will be left behind. Other nations are moving in this direction. If we want to compete, we must understand that our reliance on conventional oil and gas as a major driver of our economy must change.

There are many initiatives the government could pursue to assist people with retrofitting homes and buildings. When the eco-energy retrofit program was cancelled, I called on the government to reinstate it. This program helped thousands of Canadians renovate their homes, cut home heating costs and save an estimated three tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per home, or 1.5 million tonnes of emissions after four years of retrofitting.

The eco-energy retrofit program not only created jobs, but helped working families make needed improvements to their homes. I was pleased when the government brought back this excellent program. However, I believe it can be expanded and made more accessible to Canadians right across the country. We can work with industry and

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commercial enterprises to retrofit their buildings. We can better work with homeowners to help insulate their homes and drive down their reliance on energy. This would create jobs, would be good for the environment, and would help lower energy costs.

The primary economic problem in Canada is a slow economic recovery and a weak job market. The current job market remains weaker than before the financial crisis in October 2008. The unemployment rate is up to 7.3%. Many of the new jobs of which the government speaks are part-time positions. If we actually take into account the real unemployment rate, which includes people who have dropped out of the labour force and involuntary part-time workers, the unemployment rate in July of this year would have been 11.1%.

The youth unemployment rate is also alarming. This past summer, student unemployment hit 17.2%. This is higher than the previous summer and is up from 14% prior to the recession. Students are not earning the money they need to attend post-secondary school. They are incurring more debt than ever before.

Our most important investment is our future, and that includes ensuring our children have the ability to gain the skills needed from good-paying jobs.

There is another issue I would like to address that is having a negative impact in my riding and in the regional area of southwestern British Columbia and Vancouver. I am very concerned with the proposed changes to Service Canada, including the proposed closure of offices across the country and the reduction of staff which will have a negative impact with regard to employment insurance cases. Given the chronic staff shortage and current hiring freeze at employment insurance client services, the proposal to cut budgets, close offices and lay off workers is alarming. Levels of service are already unacceptable with wait times increasing weekly and clients often not able to make contact with an agent. There is a large backlog which is reflected in calls that we have received at my constituency office. I have been contacted by constituents who struggle to buy food and pay the rent.

This is a horrible situation for people who find themselves out of work and have to turn to government for assistance.

Service Canada, in particular EI, needs increased resources, not cuts, to ensure that it continues to be effective and responsive to the needs of Canadians especially in these difficult times.

Canadians want public investment. They want the government to take swift action to create jobs. This is critical in order to have healthy, sustainable and stable communities.

I encourage all members of this House to support his motion.

• (1200)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Madam Speaker, with respect to the NDP motion, I would like to address four particular points.

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With respect to part (a), the government has already taken action to promote job creation through the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We will take another step to implement it shortly with the next budget bill.

With respect to part (b), the government is taking action to support improved retirement income security through pooled registered pension plans.

With respect to part (c), the government is making record investments in infrastructure through our economic action plan and phase two, investments that are in the economy right now.

With respect to part (d), the government is already stimulating the economy with temporary stimulus spending. While this is difficult, it is necessary in order to support the economy through phase two of the economic action plan.

Will the NDP member support the government measures that answer the four concerns indicated in his party's motion?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Madam Speaker, it sounds as though the member is going to support this motion given the facts that he just stated. He seemed to indicate that our motion provides things he feels he can support. I absolutely welcome the support of the member. I welcome his voting in favour of the motion. We look forward to his support.

The motion calls for increased investment in this country. While the government thinks it may be doing some work in this regard, obviously we think it needs to go further.

I have outlined some of the concerns that need to be addressed in terms of small business and increased investment in public transit. This is where the federal government could play a real role in creating jobs, stimulating the economy and going further.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the time available, I would ask my colleague to expand on one element he raised which was job creation through energy conservation.

A unit of energy harvested from the existing system through demand-side management measures is indistinguishable from one produced at a generating station, except for the fact that it creates as many as seven times the person years in jobs and it is available and online immediately instead of the length of time it takes to create a new generating station.

Would the member not agree that job creation through energy conservation is an idea whose time has come, considering seven times the person years of employment for every dollar invested?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, that is a point I absolutely agree with and only touched on briefly in my speech.

That is a definite direction in which the government could be headed, if it were to make a serious commitment to job creation and our environment. The two can go hand in hand. It is time to move in that direction in the 21st century as opposed to the status quo direction in which the government seems to be heading, which is continued reliance on oil and gas.

It is clear that Canadians want to see a shift. They want to see a change. They want to be put back to work. They also want to see a clean environment. The two can go hand in hand. That is the

direction in which we must go in order to provide the sustainable future all Canadians are looking for.

We can get a very good return on an investment in a green future, a green energy future, whether it is through retrofitting homes, large buildings, commercial buildings, or whether it is through moving to a sustainable energy supply. It is a good healthy direction in which we could go if we were to focus seriously on a clean energy future.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for splitting his time with me and I also want to thank the member for Parkdale—High Park for putting forward this very good motion and for stimulating the kind of debate that it is important for us to have. I want to reference one part of the motion which says:

That...the government should take immediate action to promote job creation and address the persistently high unemployment rate among Canadian workers—

The motion also says:

—the International Monetary Fund prediction of yet higher unemployment rates in the future unless swift action is taken—

In my 10 minutes, I am going to focus on just two aspects of this. I am going to focus on the persistent high rates of poverty in this country, and national child care and early learning.

We know there are a variety of statistics, but one that we really need to pay attention to is that the official unemployment numbers in Canada are around 1.4 million Canadians and that is closer to two million when we include those who are discouraged or unemployed. This unemployment rate represents lost wages of more than \$20 billion and that does not include the lost economic stimulus and tax revenues.

When we talk about these numbers, we hear from the government about all the jobs that are created, yet in an article by the *Catalyst* in the summer of 2011, it indicated there are approximately four million Canadians living in poverty, many of them despite having a job. It poses the question, why? It says there are not enough full-time well paying jobs. Nearly one million Canadians are working part-time involuntarily. Their jobs are increasingly characterized by instability and insecurity, few or no workplace benefits and little or no access to government benefits.

We know that when people do not have stable employment, that contributes to economic uncertainty in their lives and makes it more difficult for them to contribute to the local economy.

In addition to these persistent rates of involuntary unemployment or unstable unemployment, we also have an increasing income gap in this country. According to the Conference Board of Canada in a news release, it said that:

Canada had the fourth largest increase in income equality among its peers.

It went on to say that:

—high inequality both raises a moral question about fairness and can contribute to social tensions. In Canada, the gap between the rich and poor has widened over two decades, especially compared to our peer countries.

There was an article in the *National Post* on September 21, entitled "A Problem for Everyone". The challenge with this income inequality is just not a problem in terms of the poor which is what we often think about this, it is a problem for each and every Canadian.

In the article it indicated that Canada's top 100 CEOs have seen a 13% year-over-year jump in average pay, rising to an average of \$6 million. In contrast, the average earnings of employed Canadians has fallen to \$38,500. Things are better for full-time year-round workers, but not by much. Median earnings inched up from \$44,100 to \$45,600 and in inflation-adjusted terms, not over the last year, but since 1976, and this translates into a \$1,500 increase after 33 years. We all know the costs of everything have risen much more than \$1,500 in the last 33 years.

In the same article, it translates this into what this actually means for Canadians. Since one of our targets is youth, I want to talk about what it is like for youths. In this article the author said, "I see it in my own life. Back in 1979, it took six weeks working the minimum wage full-time to cover my full-time undergraduate tuition in Toronto".

She went on to say, "Today's typical student in Ontario has to work 16 weeks", that is 10 weeks more, "at the minimum wage to cover just the cost of tuition, let alone anything else. Yet most are still frozen out of the job market, with 180,000 fewer 15 to 24-year-olds employed across Canada than when the debt crisis broke in 2008".

This income equality is not just about CEOs getting way more than the rest of us, but it is about the real impact on young people and everyone else who is working in the current economy.

In addition, one of the things we often hear when we are talking about raising people out of poverty is the government referring to it as spending. In a recent report of the National Council of Welfare, it talks about spending on poverty as an investment.

• (1205)

In an article in *The Toronto Star* on September 28, 2011, it indicated it would take:

—\$12.6 billion to give the 3.5 million Canadians living in poverty enough income to live above the poverty line in 2007. And yet Canadians spent at least double that amount—

That would be \$24 billion.

—treating the consequences of poverty that year.

Clearly, the spending pattern does not make good economic or social sense.

The article goes on to say that to lift people out of poverty what we need is a long-term plan and a long-term investment to:

—lift people out of poverty and prevent others from falling into its grip.

It goes on to say that this:

—would benefit all Canadians in reduced costs for health care, education, criminal justice, social service and other areas directly affected.

It would seem that a good start for the government would actually be to support Bill C-233, my bill on income inequality, which lays out a strategy for national poverty reduction in this country. The NDP does have good concrete ideas on how to tackle some of these problems.

I want to switch now, in my brief few minutes left, to talk about national childcare and early learning. In the same report from the National Council on Welfare, it wanted to give a good concrete

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example of why investing in national childcare makes good economic sense. It is not just about looking after children and giving parents options in terms of being able to go back to work. It wanted to talk about the economy of it all. It says that provincially, Quebec's universal \$7-a-day childcare program is credited for cutting the poverty rate of single-parent families by 15 percentage points between 1997 and 2007.

We in Canada are fortunate enough to actually have a provincial childcare program in place that gives us some real meaningful data on what the impact is on the provincial GDP. We actually have a study that has been done on this and it was called "The Economic Consequences of Quebec's Educational Childcare Policy". I want to just read some of these numbers.

There are three macroeconomic impacts. Quebec's ECEC program has had major macroeconomic consequences on women's labour force participation, on gross provincial income and on federal and provincial finances.

First let us talk about the impact on taxes and transfers. Increased family incomes generate more tax revenues and lower government transfers and credits. All types of tax revenues increase not only income and payroll taxes but all levels of government benefit, not only at the provincial level.

For the longer term, the effects will be larger still. These are some short-term effects that the article predicted. On net, for every dollar spent on ECEC, the provincial government harvests \$1.05 and the federal government gets 44¢ for nothing. This is because of the increased income. People are paying provincial and federal income tax, so the government, not investing in a program in Quebec, gets 44¢ for doing nothing. This persistent effect will probably grow over time as pre-ECEC mothers, aged 50-65, are replaced by post-ECEC mothers. This implies that the long-term effects on the growth of provincial income and government net revenues will also be larger.

In summary, by 2008, Quebec's ECEC program had increased women's employment by 70,000, that is plus-3.8%; had increased provincial GDP by \$5.2 billion; and was entirely self-financing within the provincial budget.

Clearly, here we have a good solid economic case for investing in a national childcare program and an early learning strategy. Other data indicate that for every dollar we spend in the ages of zero to six we actually save \$7 in the long run, whether it is on the justice system, on education, on income assistance, or on health care.

I would call on the government to support the motion put forward by the member for Parkdale—High Park and invest in a poverty reduction strategy, and national childcare and early learning.

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● (1210)

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Conservative government clearly disagree on the issues of taxes. The NDP supports higher taxes on Canadians while we believe that lower taxes should be in place.

This was demonstrated when our Conservative government lowered the GST, twice, from 7% to 6% and then to 5%, providing tax relief for all Canadian families. The NDP voted against both these GST reductions. In fact, it is proud of it. Here is what the current NDP finance critic said, "Cuts to the GST...take us in the wrong direction. I am very proud that our caucus stood opposed to that—".

Is the NDP still proud that it voted against lowering the GST? Does the NDP think that the GST reduction is still wrong?

● (1215)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member is putting forward a very simplistic statement. However, I have to look at the impact on families and children.

When I look at the Conference Board of Canada report from September 2011, I see that Canada scores a C grade and ranks 13th out of 17 countries in terms of child and family poverty. More than one in seven Canadian children live in poverty. So when New Democrats call for these kinds of policies around corporate taxes, we are also calling for an investment in Canadian children and families. We are calling for an investment in poverty reduction. We are calling for an investment in a national childcare strategy.

I would encourage the government to take a look at putting some of this money toward Canadian children and families.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, worldwide governments are concerned with making a shift to the green economy to stimulate growth, create new jobs, eradicate poverty and limit humanity's ecological footprint. It is no longer a choice between saving our economy and saving our environment. It is a choice between being a producer and a consumer in the old economy, and being a leader in the new economy. It is a choice between decline and prosperity.

In 2009 the government missed a real opportunity for a triple win with the renewable stimulus for positive impacts on the economy, jobs and the environment.

I wonder if the hon. member thinks that, going forward, the government should develop a green economy and job strategy to create more jobs. If so, what should it include?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, of course, my colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam in his speech very ably outlined part of that approach to a green economy when he talked about investment in public infrastructure.

New Democrats have long called for an investment in the green economy. We have laid out a number of measures in terms of investment in renewable energy. For example, removing the subsidies from oil and gas so that the money could be diverted into renewable energy and other green jobs.

In my own riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, we have been calling for investment in rail in order to encourage people to get out of their cars and into rail to contribute to greenhouse gas reductions.

I agree, and that is part of what we are aiming for with this motion, that it is very important to invest in a green job economy.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow-up on a question from my Conservative colleague who asked about taxation.

I wonder if my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan knows what the small business tax is in the socialist paradise of Manitoba. I can tell her, as a clue, that it was 11% when the NDP formed government. I will help her with the answer: it is now zero. It went down from 11% to 10% to 9%, to 8%, to 7%, and so on.

Would she agree that a tax cut to small business generates jobs, as per the socialist paradise of Manitoba with the lowest unemployment rate in the country, whereas with a tax cut to corporations, we do not really know what happens to the money?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing up that fine example of what an NDP government can do. The NDP government in Manitoba does get it by supporting small businesses.

We know small businesses are the job generators. However, with some of these big corporations, we have seen them take the money and run. They ship our jobs out of the country. We have seen that in British Columbia with the raw log exports where our jobs are being shipped south.

I agree with the member, it is a very good suggestion. Let us support small business.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this motion presented by the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

I can understand the member's concern about the economy and its effects on the lives of Canadians. Our government has been clear that our priority is job creation. I can assure the member that our government remains focused on our low-tax plan to create jobs and economic growth.

However, Canada does not stand alone in the world. We are aware that when our closest trading partner, the United States, is experiencing considerable slowdown in the pace of GDP growth—from 3% in the first six quarters of the recovery to only 0.4% in the first quarter of 2011—there can be an effect on Canada.

It is because of Canada's job creation ability in these fragile economic times that we have had the confidence that our government's approach is the right one. In the first eight months of 2011, Canada realized employment gains of over 193,000 jobs, and close to 600,000 new jobs have been created since July 2009.

While Canada's unemployment rate increased by 0.1% in August, we are currently experiencing the lowest levels of unemployment since January 2009. In many regions of the country, from south central Ontario to Quebec City to Saskatoon and Regina, we are seeing significantly lower levels of unemployment. We are seeing the signs of economic recovery.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, the economic action plan helped Canada respond to the global economic recession. Let me reflect on some of those programs that helped us respond in these fragile economic times.

Our government is dedicated to improving opportunity for Canadians through skills development. Employers increasingly require highly skilled workers who are adaptable and willing to learn. We recognize that it is more important than ever for young people to gain skills and experience to prepare for and succeed in the jobs of tomorrow.

Our youth employment programs are part of the Government of Canada strategy to create the best educated, most skilled and most flexible workforce in the world. The Government of Canada understands that helping young Canadians prepare for the jobs of tomorrow is important, especially during these hard economic times.

That is why in 2011 we permanently increased the budget for Canada's summer jobs to \$10 million. The additional funding created 3,500 additional jobs for students this summer across the country, thereby strengthening our local economies and communities.

Under the 2010 budget, our government committed an additional \$60 million to the skills link and career focus programs within the youth employment strategy. Through this additional support, we are helping more vulnerable youth, including high school dropouts and single parents, gain the skills and experience they need to access the labour market.

In the economic action plan and previous budgets, our government has acted to make post-secondary education and training more accessible for Canadians. For example, in budget 2011, it will help more students and low- and middle-income families get the skills and education to succeed.

Some of these initiatives include the following: allowing students to work more without affecting their student loans, allowing part-time students to have higher family incomes without affecting their eligibility for a Canada student loan and increasing the eligibility of a part-time student to access the Canada student loans program.

The Canada student loans program is a program I am proud to support, and I know first-hand its incredible benefit. Having been a recipient of the program myself, I was able to put myself through university, go to medical school and eventually become a pediatric orthopedic surgeon and help countless students and families' children. I know the tangible results of this program. I am proud that our Conservative government continues to support it.

These and other initiatives can be found under canlearn.ca, a great resource tool for Canadians, especially for those young Canadians who are applying for work and programs and scholarships and who need to find information on programs and financial assistance.

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Employers in communities across Canada and around the world are always looking for workers with the best skills and talent. That is why the Government of Canada encourages people to enter the trades.

We created the apprenticeship incentive grant program, which helps Canadians pursue their apprenticeship training. This grant is a \$1,000 taxable cash grant available to registered apprentices upon completion of their first or second year of an apprenticeship program in a designated Red Seal trade.

To date over 195,000 apprenticeship incentive grants have been issued, and under the economic action plan we have now made apprenticeships even more attractive. These grants are a necessary component of our job strategy, and they are designed to improve accessibility to apprenticeships and to encourage the apprenticeship process and programs so that those individuals who want to work can find those full-time jobs in their respective trades.

• (1220)

We are offering the apprenticeship completion grant introduced in Canada's economic action plan to encourage Canadians to complete their apprenticeship training and receive certification in a designated Red Seal trade. The Red Seal is widely recognized and respected as an industry standard of excellence in the trades, and our apprenticeship grants program ensures our apprentices continue their progress toward that goal.

The apprenticeship completion grant is a \$2,000 taxable cash grant available to apprentices who complete their program and receive a journey person certificate on or after January 1, 2009. So far we have issued over 44,000 completed grants. Our government is committed to supporting hard-working individuals who work toward that goal and complete it.

With each of the apprenticeship grants, an apprentice can receive up to a total of \$4,000 in grants from both of these programs. While the statistics and program descriptions are necessary, the great news for Canadians is that there is nothing better than hearing from Canadians as they describe the concrete benefits of these programs.

In my riding of Simcoe—Grey, Tim Young, the owner of Steer Enterprises in Glen Huron, is one such individual whose hard work and dedication helps him to grow his business by utilizing the apprenticeship grants program offered by the Conservative government. Currently he has three apprentices working in his company, but over the course of this program he has utilized the apprenticeship grant program offered by our government to the tune of up to 50 apprentices. These apprentices are now all getting their first successful jobs so they can move forward. These are real results and benefits, and precisely the things we need to be focused on so that Canadians can be successful. I encourage any young Canadian who is considering the trades to apply for these grants.

Through our targeted initiative for older workers, our government has helped over 16,000 older workers to find new skills and employment to help them transition at a vulnerable point in their lives.

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In the first phase of Canada's economic action plan, we provided an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits to 1.1 million claimants. We also helped 190,000 long-tenured workers receive extended EI benefits and we provided career transition assistance to support longer-term training.

We make work-sharing more flexible. In response to the recent economic downturn, our Conservative government temporarily extended the maximum duration of work-sharing agreements to 52 weeks, eased requirements for employers' recovery plans and streamlined application processes. More than 298,000 individuals have benefited from over 10,800 work-sharing agreements from February 2009 to September 2011.

Our government's work-sharing program is designed to help employers facing a temporary downturn in business to avert layoffs, and the results are clear: our program is working. Work-sharing provides a win-win circumstance for everyone involved, and our government is committed to supporting this program.

Canadians continue to enjoy the dignity that comes with a job. Employers are able to address a reduced requirement for labour, and at the end of the day people who otherwise would accept unemployment insurance benefits are attached to the workforce and continue to contribute to Canada's economic growth.

We extended the targeted initiative for older workers by \$50 million over two years in the 2011 budget. This program is a federal-provincial-territorial cost-shared initiative designed to provide support to unemployed older workers in communities affected by significant downsizing or high unemployment. These programs are normally coordinated by community-based organizations and offer a combination of approaches that include skills training, work experience and assistance to become self-employed.

Older workers are valuable to our economy. They provide experience and skills and stability. They have helped build our country over the years and have contributed to our society and our economy. We need to ensure that their transition out of the workforce and into retirement is a smooth and trouble-free one that they enjoy.

Our government has also invested \$420 million to renew two EI pilot programs for one year. These include working while on claim pilot projects and the best-14-weeks pilot project. The purpose of an EI pilot project is to test, for a definitive period of time, changes to the EI program. The goal is to make it more consistent with current employment practices and trends in order to improve service to the public.

The working while on claim pilot increases the working while on claim threshold to allow individuals to earn greater than \$75 or 40% of their benefits and tests whether this increased threshold will provide a greater incentive for individuals to accept all available work while receiving EI benefits.

The best-14-weeks program calculates EI benefits based on the best 14 weeks of earnings over a 52-week period. It tests whether this approach encourages claimants to accept all available work prior to establishing a claim.

• (1225)

Furthermore, we enhanced the wage earner protection program. We are extending this program to employees who lost their jobs when their employers attempted restructuring. It takes into account the six-month and the end of bankruptcy or receivership time program. This will cost about \$4.5 million annually.

In my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, I can speak to the next phase of the economic action plan. We saw a \$1 million investment over two years to expand the delivery of our preventive mediation program. The goal of this program is to help employers and unions move from adversarial to collaborative relationships.

Let me conclude by talking about Stephen Cecchin, who participated in the skills link program as an apprenticeship builder. Previously Stephen worked in seasonal and part-time jobs that did not provide him with much of the skills training he needed to advance his career. After participating in the Niagara Peninsula homes employment project, he was offered an apprenticeship with an electrical contractor. That is the break he needed. Now he is looking forward to building a better future for himself and his family.

Our government is working hard on making sure Canadian workers and their families can gain the skills and training they require to create opportunities for themselves.

Canadians are not asking government to create makeshift jobs. What they want is a government that believes in them and will help them with building their future. Canadians are not looking for a handout; they are looking for a hand up.

As we saw in the last election, Canadians overwhelmingly supported this government's low-tax plan for jobs and economic growth. I would ask members to do what Canadians did and support our Prime Minister as he continues to deliver on this important priority for Canadians.

• (1230)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has painted a very rosy picture for Canadian youth, considering that youth unemployment in Canada is more than double the already high unemployment rate for all Canadians and considering the terrible tragedy that goes with that for a young individual just starting out in life.

I would ask the member how she and her government can justify, for example, the minister from Muskoka spending \$50 million in his riding for gazebos and hockey rinks. How can she justify the creation of fake lakes in Toronto, procurement costs that cost Canadians billions of dollars and the inappropriate use of government jets and search and rescue vehicles? How can she justify this gross misuse of our scarce tax dollars when so many youth are still unemployed and facing an even bleaker future, according to the International Monetary Fund and all economists today?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, it is important to put these numbers into context. Youth unemployment in Canada is 14%, and we do need to focus on that, but it is 21% in the EU, 18.1% in the U.S., 23.4% in France and 46.2% in Spain.

In 2010-11, the youth employment strategy helped 57,000 youth get job skills and work experience so that they could be successful in entering the labour market. The economic action plan is helping to grow and create jobs. That means an opportunity for employment for all of our students.

Under our government, Canadians have benefited from the creation of 600,000 net new jobs. Our plan is about creating jobs. Those are jobs for Canadian students and youth. Unlike NDP members, who want to raise taxes and eliminate jobs, we are creating jobs across the country.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned economic development. I want to ask her if she believes in the corporate welfare for corporate serial killers that the government continues to give to the asbestos industry when the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society and the National Institute of Public Health are all calling for a complete ban on asbestos in all of its forms.

How can the member, as a medical doctor, in all good conscience defend and even participate in actively promoting and subsidizing the asbestos industry—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I would like to remind all hon. members of the matter that is before the House today. Their questions and comments ought to be oriented toward that.

If the hon. parliamentary secretary would like to respond to that comment, she has the floor.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, this government has promoted the safe and appropriate use of chrysotile products.

•(1235)

Mr. Pat Martin: It's a disgrace.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I ask the member opposite to please be polite.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague what a good measure would be in our economic action plan.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, in the economic action plan and the movement forward that we have, in the field that I have looked at, there are several initiatives that are supporting the economy. Whether it is extending the accelerated capital cost allowance, enhancing or extending programs to help businesses keep workers, like the work share program, or the hiring credit for small businesses, all of these initiatives are essential to growing our economy and

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ensuring our employers can employ more individuals, creating jobs in Canada so we can ensure every Canadian has a job.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite said it is important to put the numbers we are citing into context, and I fully agree with her. The problem is that we can make the context suit the numbers. I notice that comparing our situation to any situation that is worse than our own is a classic argument that is used quite often by my Conservative colleagues.

What if we were to put the numbers into context by comparing ourselves to ourselves and stop turning a blind eye to the things that are not going so well? Is my colleague aware that the unemployment rate has gone up, that there are more part-time workers and that household debt has never been as high as it is right now?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, we are focused on creating jobs. Since July 2009, this government has put forward a plan, a plan that is working and that has created over 600,000 new jobs, any per cent of which are full-time jobs.

We are working toward ensuring more Canadians are employed. Whether it is through the new hiring tax credit, the work share agreements, extending EI pilot projects to ensure there are relationships between employers and employees and ensuring employees are attached to the labour market, we have a plan and it is working. That is very different from the NDP tax hike that would eliminate jobs and have more people either with a part-time job or no job at all.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition seems to continually wish to bite the hand that feeds. It seems to be continually railing against our corporations and our businesses that make a few dollars here and, of course, pay their taxes back, whether they are municipal, provincial or federal, and provide the basis for a sound and caring society.

I can give members two local examples. Kellogg's spent over \$100 million investing in our riding in the last year and a half, the first time outside of the United States since 1986. Procter & Gamble just came in and spent over \$100 million and is planning on spending \$100 million to create more jobs in our economy.

Do members suppose that these companies would invest in Canada should they not have a reasonable opportunity to get a return on their investment?

Our economic action plan provided for accelerated capital writeoffs and provided for a lower tax base. They would not be here without that. There are net gains for Canada. Why is the opposition opposed to that?

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Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a good point about how well we are doing compared to our international competitors.

Canada has the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the entire G7. The prestigious magazine, *The Economist*, has named Canada the best place to invest and do business in the next five years.

We are focused on creating jobs. We have a plan, the plan is working and we will continue with that plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. member. At home in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean there have been many job losses and plant closures. What is more, our population is aging. Many people are asking us whether immigrants are going to come settle in the regions.

How do the Conservatives treat newcomers, doctors from other countries for instance? There is a doctor shortage in Canada. What are the Conservatives doing to help foreign doctors integrate into the system more quickly and come work in Quebec? What is the Conservative position on that?

• (1240)

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned a few times today in the House, our government is focused on creating jobs.

There are many organizations in the province of Quebec that do support this. I will read what the Montreal Board of Trade said. It said, “Budget 2011 also includes some positive measures to increase the productivity of Canadian businesses and to better support them on international markets. Generally speaking, the budget acts on requests made by the board in this area. It contains some of the good measures for life sciences and information technologies. Moreover, the \$100 million over two years for clean energy research and development could benefit the ecotech Quebec cluster”.

The Quebec Employers Council said, “We believe that the federal government's budget 2011-2012 is a responsible plan that stays on course regarding orientations announced in the previous years. The tax cuts for businesses already planned are not questioned, which should encourage private investments in our country, ones that are needed. This budget creates an environment that promotes economic development without reducing transfers to individuals, businesses or other governments, and without raising taxes or tariffs”.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

I would first like to thank the member for Parkdale—High Park for her excellent motion that summarizes the NDP's positions very well and contrasts them with the Conservatives' values and priorities. I would also like to remind my Conservative colleagues on the other side of the House that Quebecers gave the NDP a strong mandate to represent them over the next four years. They must take this into consideration.

In discussing this motion, members are making many references to the uncertain financial and economic situation in Canada in the

next few years. A number of financial institutions are concerned about the economy. I am referring to the International Monetary Fund, for example, which is forecasting that Canada's unemployment rate will rise again this year. Therefore, it is very problematic that the Conservatives are telling us that Canada's economy is in good shape, that we should not worry, and that we should have faith in them. We see that it is not true.

The International Monetary Fund also indicated that the economy would grow much more slowly than forecast. That is another sign that greatly worries the NDP. The organization also revised downwards its forecasts for Canada's economic growth, now estimated at 2.1% for this year and 1.9% for next year. Those watching know very well that the cost of living is increasing at a higher rate, which suggests that there may be another recession. It is very worrisome because we have not yet bounced back from the 2008 recession.

That is why the NDP believes that the absolute priority must be to not cut stimulus funding, but instead to invest in the Canadian economy. This would be carried out in two main ways, although there are others, including investing in infrastructure.

I will speak a little about my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. My riding includes nine municipalities. During the spring and summer, I met with some of the mayors, and many of them talked to me about their tremendous infrastructure needs. My region is not particularly urban. It is primarily rural. Many small municipalities have limited administrative and financial means. That is why it is important for the Conservative government to invest in small municipalities across Canada, Quebec and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. It would be very welcome.

However, I get very worried when I see that the Conservatives want to cut stimulus funding. In Canada, infrastructure is very important, and I am concerned.

Other organizations agree with the NDP's calls for the Conservatives to maintain stimulus funding. BMO's chief economist, Sherry Cooper, said that this is not the time for the government to adopt austerity measures. I completely agree with Dr. Cooper. I remember a few years ago Canada was in a good economic position and had a surplus. That was the time to reduce our debt, to reduce our deficit. Today, we have still not yet recovered from the 2008 recession. So it is very important to continue to invest in infrastructure and worker transition programs, and to invest money in targeted sectors where employment can be stimulated. All of these measures will strengthen the Canadian economy in the coming years.

Sherry Cooper added that the misplaced belief that the road to economic prosperity is paved with near-term fiscal tightening, as espoused by our own Prime Minister and the British Prime Minister, shows we have learned nothing from Herbert Hoover's inappropriate response to the Great Depression.

The NDP is not alone in calling on the government to think again about its second phase of Canada's economic action plan. TD Economics has also said that any unexpected downward shift in the markets could plunge Canada into another recession.

• (1245)

That is worrisome. I can just imagine what Canadians at home who lost their jobs during the recession are going through. If they are lucky, they found a job that is likely less stable and lower-paid and now they see all these economic leaders announcing that they might have to relive everything they have gone through in the last few years. That is very troubling. I urge the Conservatives to take this into consideration and remain flexible in their economic stimulus program.

What is more, Scotiabank has said that “we're faced with the distinct possibility that the Canadian economy could be the first to stumble”. I do not really understand why the Conservatives tell us from time to time that the economic situation in Canada is good, to trust them and that they received a strong mandate from the Canadian public. Canadians and Quebecers are not blind. I would kindly ask the Conservatives to review their economic action plan and to take into consideration not only what we in the NDP are saying, but also what Canadian economic leaders are saying about this.

Scotiabank has also published a report saying that the Canadian economy could enter a recession even without a further unexpected drop in the U.S. economy. We know that the U.S. economy has already had many problems with regard to economic recovery, which is very slow. Again, according to Scotiabank, even without a decline in the U.S. stock market and real estate market, Canada could enter into another recession. That worries me greatly. In my region we have a high rate of unemployment. Many of the jobs are not secure. I am really worried about Canada's economic situation.

Then there is the Conference Board of Canada. Glen Hodgson indicated this week, at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, that this is not the right time for the government to cut spending. He emphasized the fact that the government should remain flexible in its approach. That is what the NDP and I are asking of the Conservatives. He also repeated a number of times that tax expenditure—in other words, the inefficient tax cuts the Conservatives are giving to corporations—should be included in the scrutiny of government spending.

The Bank of Canada is very reputable. I encourage the Conservatives to pay attention to what the Bank of Canada is saying and what it is doing. The Bank of Canada is also very worried about Canada's economic situation. And for that very reason, it recently decided not to harm the economy by reducing demand. Thus, it kept interest rates low. It is very important for the Canadian economy that interest rates remain low to encourage spending and exports.

However, the government really needs to be doing its part by investing in the Canadian economy and in infrastructure. Private investments are limited right now because private companies are worried about the same things that concern the NDP when it comes to the Canadian economy. Companies are not yet ready to invest their hard-earned money for fear that another recession is coming

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and they will lose money. That is why it is so important that the Conservative government set an example and fund infrastructure programs.

I want to share some key numbers. I know how much the government likes numbers. I will tell it like it is; I will read out the real numbers.

The number of officially unemployed Canadians is still 1.4 million. If we include those who are discouraged or underemployed, that number is closer to 2 million. So, 2 million people in Canada are out of work. That is very worrying. That is the reason the NDP wants so much to stimulate the economy. We want the government to invest in small business. We spoke about that last spring. It is important for us that the government cut the small business tax rate by 2%. Small businesses in Canada create more than half of all new jobs. By investing in this sector rather than in large corporations, Canada will be able to create jobs, sustainable jobs. It will solve the problem of the Canadian economic crisis and instability.

• (1250)

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member opposite. He has spoken at some length about the fragility of the economy and of his concerns.

Yesterday the European Commission proposed, for the 27 European Union countries, a new financial transaction tax. This is an extra tax for every citizen in the European community. It would be imposed on every banking transaction and every financial transaction. That means, when a citizen would go to an ATM, a transaction fee would be imposed.

This is an idea that the NDP has traditionally supported. It impacts every individual in the country. Indeed, the NDP industry critic and deputy national caucus chair, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, has previously introduced a bill specifically for a financial transaction tax in Canada.

Given the context of the commentary of the member opposite, why does the NDP support a financial transaction tax? Does the hon. member think it is a good idea?

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative member's question leaves me a little perplexed because, to my knowledge, this is not Europe. Unlike the Conservatives, who refused our request, we in the NDP want to reduce the tax rate for small business. We do not want to raise taxes; we want to lower them for small businesses. Instead of 11% for small businesses, we would like to reduce that by 2 percentage points to 9%. This 2% difference would give small businesses the flexibility they need to hire new employees. This would do a world of good, especially in small towns. Anyone who is just starting up a small business does not want a high tax rate. The first five years are already difficult enough.

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In short, this is not Europe and the NDP wants to lower taxes for Canadians who own small businesses.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2009 the government invested \$3 billion in green stimulus spending. Germany invested \$14 billion, the United States invested \$112 billion and China invested \$221 billion in green infrastructure and in the process created thousands of new green jobs.

The government should accept intergenerational responsibility and develop a national sustainable energy strategy to position Canada to succeed in the global economy, to continue to build the country and to create a significant number of jobs.

Could the hon. member comment on how national targets for the development of low-impact renewable energy could achieve economic jobs and sustainability goals?

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Liberal member for this excellent question.

For many years now, the NDP has been focusing on a green economy. Personally, I truly believe that we need to focus on the green economy for Canada's economic future, and there are several ways we can do so, unlike the Conservatives who are stubbornly clinging to the world of the 20th century and continuing to encourage the use of oil and gas.

We need to support green energy in every way we can. Quebec strongly supports hydroelectricity, a renewable energy source. These positive measures will ensure the sustainability of Canada's economic and energy future. I agree that we need to invest in the green economy. I simply do not understand why the Conservatives do not realize that if they want Canadians to get ahead of other nations, the government needs to invest in green energy sources like wind, geothermal and hydroelectric power. I think it is very important for Canada to invest in green energy every way it can.

[English]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House in support of the NDP put forward by my hon. colleague from Parkdale—High Park in order to address a matter that is foremost in my thoughts and is a pressing concern for the people of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

In particular, the motion states that the government should:

—take immediate action to promote job creation and address the persistently high unemployment rate among Canadian workers...take immediate action to ensure all Canadians can rely on a stable and guaranteed pension as they plan their retirement in a period of record household debt and declining stock markets...

These are major concerns in my community. I represent a large, beautiful, rural riding where, sadly, too many members of my community are un-waged or under-waged. Many people living in my community who are in poverty are over retirement age.

Low-income women always outnumber low-income men in Canada. Two out of every three poor adults are women, yet women do two-thirds of the world's work, receive 10% of the world's income

and own 1% of the means of production. This disparity is most egregious when we look at aging populations. According to the Conference Board of Canada, under the Conservative government, between 2006 and 2009, Canada saw an increase of 128,000 elderly people living in poverty. Among them, 70% were women.

The reality of senior women living in poverty is not an incidental or marginal issue. It is a major concern. Indeed, it is a crisis. This crisis will only increase as the baby boomer generation in Canada moves closer and closer to retirement. These are the people who will suffer the most if we do not invest in our economy.

There are upstream causes to older women living in poverty. In Canada almost half of all poor families are supported by a single woman whose average income is about 30% below the poverty line. There is no one reason why women are so much poorer than men, rather there are many and they are all systematic. Data from 12 industrialized nations found that formally employed women worked about 20% longer hours than men, yet women comprise the majority of the poorest in these countries. Most women are still responsible for the unpaid work of child rearing and taking care of sick people and elderly people. Poor women who are fortunate to have jobs are therefore stuck in low-paid part-time work because they must split their time between work and caring for their family.

The government must take action to promote job creation, good jobs, immediately in order to support these families. According to the publication entitled, "The Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty", released yesterday by National Council of Welfare, an independent body established to advise the federal government, there is a correlation between poverty and the lack of investing. The report shows that investing to reduce poverty actually benefits the entirety of our society. In fact, it would save Canada billions of dollars.

I would particularly like to point out that the report finds that child and senior benefits provide secure, non-stigmatizing incomes broadly in society and that these have benefits well beyond individual recipients because the improved well-being of today's seniors enables them to remain active in our communities.

Too many of the jobs created by the government are under-waged and part-time. It is a weak job market. That unemployment is at 7.3%, that full-time permanent family-supporting jobs remain extremely difficult to find and that ongoing uncertainty regarding Canadian retirement savings plans are factors that are increasingly threatening our economy. This is why New Democrats are proposing strategic investments to promote economic growth.

We need to take immediate action to ensure that all Canadians, especially those who are most vulnerable like those I have mentioned, women, elderly people, especially elderly women, and children, are taken care of and not left behind by a threatening recession. We need to ensure that all Canadians, especially these people, are protected in hard economic times.

This is why I urge all members of the House to support the motion. It is rather simple why we should support it. It is a reasonable way to help families in Canada.

● (1300)

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like ask my hon. colleague opposite a question.

She talked about hard-working Canadian families, yet the NDP wants taxes to go up. As I said to my other colleague, the NDP wants transaction fees to go up. Financial transaction fees are things that impact hard-working families that can ill afford to pay them.

The NDP is on the record supporting these tax increases. This does not make sense to me if those members are truly worried about hard-working families. Would the hon. member please explain?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat something and I hope my colleague can deduce how the economy works from it. According to the National Council of Welfare, investing would save Canada billions of dollars.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very passionate intervention about the growing inequality and those who really need the benefits of government spending.

The members opposite are erroneously saying that we want to increase taxes. That is absolutely not the case.

Given that the majority of Canadians did not support the government or its direction, would she comment on the growing inequality in Canadian society? Would she comment on how what we are calling for, strategic investments in physical and social infrastructure, can help decrease that growing economic inequality gap?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Parkdale—High Park is doing great work.

Investing in Canada and strengthening our economy are important especially in these hard times. She is right that investing in social and physical infrastructure will help support all families.

The government is leaving behind the poorest of the poor. It is increasing the inequality in our country. It has forgotten too many families. The government needs to remember that this House represents all Canadians.

● (1305)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the NDP on a fine motion today. I would like to go beyond that a bit and address an answer to a question that was posed to the member for Parkdale—High Park. I was not quite happy with that answer.

The member for Parkdale—High Park was correct in making the connection between the behaviour of the Conservative government

and the behaviour of Herbert Hoover leading into the Great Depression.

Another thing that happened in the Great Depression was that there was trade friction between Canada and the United States. Countries put up trade tariffs.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague would care to comment about the buy American policies that the U.S. job stimulus proposal has and the position of the Ontario provincial NDP which now has a buy Ontario policy. Perhaps she could comment on the danger of a tit-for-tat trade war, just as there was in the Great Depression.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, there are a few parts to that question.

In answer to the first part, the member is exactly right that the government has not learned from the mistakes of the past. The second part referred to the Ontario election, on which I will not comment. However, we absolutely need to learn from the mistakes of the past and invest while we still can before the recession takes hold in order to save the most vulnerable people in our society and save our economy.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the opposition motion. It is always a pleasure to speak in the House of Commons. It is one of the honours of being elected as a member of Parliament. Something we all hold dear to our hearts is the opportunity to express how we feel about issues.

Today is an opposition day. For those who do not know how it works, a certain number of days are allocated to the opposition parties and they are able to bring forward motions on topics which they think are important regarding what the government is or is not doing. We are debating an opposition motion today.

I am interested that the NDP brought forward a motion regarding the economy. I have been in the House for five years now and it is hard to remember when the NDP wanted to talk about economics in the House of Commons. The mover of the motion, the member for Parkdale—High Park, has been in the House for some time and I do not recall her mentioning economics, but she is now which, from our perspective, is the right thing to be doing.

We have been talking about jobs, economic development and making sure that this country is able to withstand the economic turbulence that has affected not just Canada and the United States but countries all over the world. We see the very drastic changes that are happening in Europe. People have come to the conclusion that this is the priority. It has been the priority of this government for many years.

We have dealt with the economic shocks that have affected Canada over the last number of years. We brought forward a plan to maintain and increase jobs in Canada. That economic development and support has been helping Canadian families survive the very difficult recession over the last number of years.

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I need to point out that before the recession, it was this government that took action on the debt. I should remind everybody what debt is. Debt is an obligation to future generations. It is money we have borrowed as a country which needs to be paid back. We cannot just not pay it back. We see the situation in Greece where debt issues are so extreme Greece is at risk of not being able to pay its debt. We cannot ignore debt. We cannot say it is someone else's problem or that we will deal with it on another day, in another Parliament, in another decade. We need to deal with it now.

We like to deal with facts. Our government paid down \$38 billion of debt before the recession hit. This put our country in a much better position to deal with the issues facing our economy during the recession. It was a prudent way of positioning ourselves. We are a leader in the G7 in terms of being ready to put in place the difficult processes that are needed for us to handle any downturn in the economy. When there was a downturn in the economy and the recession hit, we had to put a plan together to make sure that we created jobs and continued economic growth here in Canada.

That is why we created Canada's economic action plan. It was not an overnight plan. It was not something we did one day and then forgot about it. It is taking a number of years to implement that plan to ensure growth, jobs and family security. It is not something we had for just a day, a month or a very short period of time. It is something we can build on as a country. We are doing better than our G7 partners coming out of the recession. All of the significant economic players around the world are congratulating Canada on its role. The economic action plan has played a significant role in the survival of our economy and the progress of our economy in Canada.

● (1310)

That plan is still in action. We will be seeing part two of our economic action plan, another year of it. We passed a budget in this new Parliament. As we do every year, budget implementation requires two segments. We did one in June which implemented some parts of the budget. Next week there will be another budget implementation bill to implement the rest of the budget. There were so many good things in the budget passed in the spring we had to break it into two parts to make sure the proper legislation was in place to make. That will happen next week.

If the NDP and our Liberal friends are really serious about economic development, job creation and moving the economy forward, they will support the budget implementation bill next week to implement the second part of the budget. On May 2 voters certainly supported it by sending us back to the House of Commons with a majority government. They want us to implement it. Canadians asked us to make sure that we implemented our commitments on the economic action plan. We intend to do that. Based on today's motion I cannot see why the opposition parties would be opposed to implementing the second phase of our economic action plan.

In the past the NDP members have voted against many of our measures, maybe all of our measures. I cannot think of one measure they supported. I do not have a perfect memory, but I cannot remember any of the economic policies or legislation that we put forward to improve our economy being supported by the NDP. I am glad to see that today the NDP members are making the economy a

priority in the first opposition day motion of this session. I am hopeful they will move away from their past non-support of these policies so we can continue to create jobs and come out of the recession in the best position of any industrialized country in the world. That is what the economic action plan will do. That is what it delivered in the past, and it is what it will do, if we are able to continue with the second phase, which we plan to do.

Fortunately in the election on May 2 the Conservative government was returned with a majority, so we will be able to continue with that plan. Some people may say that it is not good enough. Opposition members have voted against everything we have been attempting to do. I do not know why it would not be good enough. There is always more to be done. However, we have created 600,000 new jobs and 80% of them are full-time jobs. The economic action plan is working and is moving this country forward. I am hoping there will be support for that next week when our budget implementation bill comes forward.

I want to talk about what the economic action plan has meant for Burlington, the riding I represent. It is an urban riding just outside of Toronto on the west side. It has a fairly diverse economy. There is not one big employer. The largest employer in Burlington has about 1,000 employees. The rest are small- and medium-size businesses and enterprises, entrepreneurs who are making a difference, creating jobs, investing in our economy, investing in our youth, making sure that the quality of life in Burlington is progressing.

Our role through the economic action plan is to make sure that economic development continues and that we support it, not through higher taxes as the opposition members are advocating today, and not from a bunch of bureaucratic processes that would slow things down. We made a commitment in the economic action plan to deliver on infrastructure for communities that were willing to move projects forward, to be able to spend some money and leverage that to create jobs in our communities. I will provide some examples of the success we have experienced this past week.

● (1315)

I was at an opening for the donors of a new performing arts centre in the city of Burlington. It did not have one before. Prior to being elected to the House of Commons, I was a city councillor and had been working on establishing a performing arts centre in Burlington since 1999. That new performing arts centre is about to open because the members of the community came together. We looked at what was required in terms of this infrastructure project and through the use of the economic action plan we developed and will soon open the \$36 million facility. We are proud of that accomplishment.

I am not a member of the transportation committee but filled in for one of its members at a meeting yesterday. Being from the GTA, I have an interest in public transit, which was the subject the committee was studying. There was an indication that \$4 billion had been invested into new transit through the provisions contained within the economic action plan. Some of that money had been designated for Burlington. We have a new transit centre there.

We have participated with our partners, the Ontario government as well as municipalities like the City of Toronto, in the GO train investments that were made. Those are ones I am familiar with.

We are making long-term investments through the economic action plan. That has created jobs. It has also left a legacy of infrastructure that will service the cities and communities I am familiar with for many years to come. That infrastructure will allow people to transport themselves to and from work. It will make businesses more productive by allowing them to transport their goods and services more efficiently. By providing people with alternative forms of transportation, it will reduce the amount of vehicles on the road, which in turn will be better for the environment.

I am proud of the economic action plan that was put together by our Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister, which members have supported in the House. It will enable job creation not just in theory or in study but through the provisions it has put in place. In conjunction with our municipal and provincial partners, we have used those provisions to make investments to react quickly to issues.

Of course making those investments will affect the deficit. However, there was an agreement made with our G7 economic partners that a certain percentage of our GDP would be used as investments to help stimulate the economy. Based on what I have heard and have read regarding other countries, Canada has been the most successful in terms of leveraging that investment into jobs, economic growth and the stability we have needed throughout this recession. We managed to do that without increasing taxes.

I will now speak to the measures we have put in place to ensure people have money in their pockets rather than having to rely completely on our government for economic growth.

Part (d) of the motion would have members believe that government is the only engine capable of driving economic growth. However, we on this side of the House do not agree with that position.

We believe the private sector, whether businesses or individuals, is a real partner in our economic growth. Tax savings for a typical family are now just over \$3,000. Those savings include taxes such as the GST, which in some provinces is the HST. We have lowered the GST from 7% to 5%.

We have introduced the employment tax credit to help employers and ensure people have jobs. We have introduced others such as the working income tax benefit and the child care tax credit. We have been actively ensuring that Canadians have opportunity.

● (1320)

One program devised by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister that I am thankful for is the tax free savings account, TFSA.

Business of Supply

It has made a significant difference in my riding. People remind me daily of the importance of this new savings tool which did not exist before we took office. For many years not much had changed to give Canadians an opportunity to save money. As is the case with taxed money, this money would not be further taxed in future. Canadians can invest it and use it for their own growth. The expenditures coming from these tax free savings accounts will bode well for our economy in the future. It also bodes well for those who are trying to save now.

We are encouraging people to save money. There has been much discussion in the media as well as in the House regarding personal debt levels. The Conservative government has devised a piece of legislation that will change the financial system in this country. As well, it is helpful with respect to promoting personal savings.

Since we have taken office, tax freedom day comes two weeks earlier than it did when the Liberal government was in office.

Our economic action plan is taking this country in the right direction. It is the right mix of legislation in terms of its ability to stimulate the economy as well as to help people invest in their own enterprises or their communities. We have been taking the appropriate approach. Canada has been recognized for that by many nations and many economic organizations around the world. However, there is no doubt that we still have more to do.

What led us here in the first place is that we are proper stewards of the public coffers. We understood that debt was an issue and we needed to get our minds around that first. We must continue with the process we have in place. We have not completed the economic action plan process. It needs to continue. We are coming forth with legislation to do that.

We must return to our principles and values of ensuring that our debt is manageable. To ensure we have balanced books, we must reduce our debt as soon as possible.

There is no doubt we must keep an eye on the issues happening in Europe. The Minister of Finance, the governor of the Bank of Canada, and the Prime Minister have spoken to Canadians about that. We must ensure that stabilizes because what happens in Europe will affect us in the end. It is hard to believe that what happens in Greece will affect people in Burlington, Ontario. If the European countries are unable to resolve their debt issues or pay their bills, Canadian companies will lose customers. We are a trading country. We need those customers to ensure a stable, progressive economy that will produce sales for our people, whether they be in Burlington or elsewhere across the country. I wish those European countries well.

I hope all members of the House will support the continuation of the economic action plan through to its fruition.

Business of Supply

● (1325)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

I am pleased that he recognizes the importance of investing in infrastructure but I would like him to stay with me a bit longer if he would.

One of the areas in which Canada is very weak is in investing in research and development and, finally, in innovation, the biggest driver of economic growth. We are currently investing little or nothing in these areas, despite the huge amount of cash that is currently flowing in these markets.

What does the hon. member think about our weakness in the area of innovation?

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, the member sits on the government operations committee with me and I have enjoyed our short time there.

I like to deal with facts in the House. If we look at the facts, this government has actually invested more in science and technology and innovation than any other Canadian government in history. I cannot hold my colleague across the way responsible for voting against it because he was not here. However, he is here now. Therefore, I expect the member and the NDP, the opposition party, to support the money we are investing in science and technology and innovation.

I have listened to the questions today as they relate to this question. They talk about the many billions of dollars that are in the pockets of corporate Canada that have not been invested and that they are sitting on large cash reserves. Adding taxes to the corporate sector will not get that sector to invest one single cent in the economy. It would take money away from those who create jobs, the entrepreneurs who understand supply and demand, and would give it to government, which I am not sure is the greatest steward of tax dollars. We want to ensure that taxes are reduced so that the entrepreneurs and families who control their own pocketbooks can make those decisions.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem with the speakers on the government side is that they talk as though nothing has happened since the budget was first presented in February. Even if one assumes the budget in February was perfect for the conditions of the day, and I do not make that assumption, the fact is the world economy has worsened dramatically in the last six months. What may have been appropriate in February, some six to eight months ago, is no longer appropriate today given the weakening of the world economy. This is exactly what the IMF has said, what Sherry Cooper has said and what the economists have said.

Why do those members behave and speak as though the world is still tranquil and great when indeed it is not?

As well, I may have missed it, but is the government for or against this motion?

● (1330)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I sit on the government operations committee with the member for Markham—Unionville. I was on the finance committee with him in the last Parliament. However, I have trouble with his credibility in asking that question.

I distinctly recall when we previously brought forward the economic action plan and it was obvious that there would be some spending that would put us in a deficit position the Liberals were completely opposed. As we were entering the recession, we understood that we needed to act fast and we did. We brought forth the economic action plan. Then the member and his colleagues were completely opposed. However, six or seven months later they feel we are not spending enough. Then they complained that not enough was being spent in their ridings.

Those members are all over the map. They have no economic plan as a party. They do not have a leader or an economic plan. They have no credibility on the issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to clarify the NDP's position on taxes. First, the NDP is not in favour of raising taxes for large corporations. It simply wants the Conservatives to give big businesses fewer tax breaks since there is no reason for them. Taxes, which are a progressive system for the equitable redistribution of wealth to all classes of society, are very positive since they make it possible to provide public services to all classes of society in a very fair manner.

Second, as if government policies were not discriminatory enough, tax policies have created even more unequal societies in the G8 countries. Approximately one-third of Canada's economic growth in terms of revenue benefited the richest 1% of the population. In this regard, the Conference Board of Canada has said repeatedly that tax expenditures, including the ineffective tax breaks the government grants to large corporations, should—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would encourage all hon. members to pay some attention to the Chair. We give guidance, in terms of time, including the hon. member for Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you for that lesson, Mr. Speaker. I will have to do a better job of paying attention to you, which I always do, of course.

When we put through our economic action plan, which contained corporate tax reductions, businesses made investment decisions and plans around those tax reductions being in place because they had been passed by the House of Commons.

The NDP wants to remove those tax reductions and change the plan. That would be a tax increase for which companies and the industries would need to readjust all their investment planning based on paying higher taxes to the Government of Canada.

Business of Supply

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Burlington for one of the best speeches I have heard here all day and for all his good work on the finance committee to help the government come forward, with the Minister of Finance, with a nice balanced approach out of this world economic recession.

However, I have been listening to the NDP speeches today and it seems that many of the members feel that the only way to create jobs is by increasing government spending and increasing taxes.

I know my colleague lived in Ontario during those horrible years when the NDP was in government and the current leader of the Liberal Party was actually the premier, where he thought that he could spend his way out of a recession. We saw the devastating effects of that for our kids in the future.

The member said that he was not quite sure, but I would remind him that the NDP actually voted against all our stimulus packages for infrastructure, lowering taxes for small business, lowering taxes for corporations, and actually voted against help for the automotive industry in Oshawa, where I come from, which is very important for those high-level manufacturing jobs.

What does the member think would happen to our recovery if the government actually adopted the high tax, high spend policies that we have seen in the socialist countries of Greece, Portugal and Spain? What does he think would happen to our recovery here if the government actually adopted those radical policies of the NDP?

● (1335)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, obviously, it would be devastating to our economy and to the approach that we have been taking.

We think we have been doing the right thing with our economic action plan. We have made strategic investments that create jobs, not jobs just for today but long-term jobs, and we are creating infrastructure that will support the economic growth of our communities in the long term, not just in the short term.

I will make one last point. The member made a great point when he said that Ontario went through a very terrible time when the NDP were in place. In fact, the NDP leader in Ontario listed all the NDP leaders in the provinces and left out the NDP government in Ontario. That is how bad it is. Its own people do not even like what it did.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

I am pleased to join with my colleagues today in the House in support of the motion.

The government does a very good job of blowing smoke in mirrors. It totes around this notion that Canada's economy is not suffering and that we are not still experiencing the effects of the economic downturn, meanwhile ignoring the reality facing many Canadians and their families.

Many families in my constituency with whom I am speaking are still having trouble making ends meet. Not only that, but in order to make ends meet, many Canadians are forced to take on two, three or

four part-time jobs. Why is this, one might ask? It is because far too many household supporting jobs have been lost and have disappeared. Canadians are being forced to turn to any form of employment that they can secure. These are usually more precarious forms of employment. I know that many of the constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River are burning the candle at both ends.

The current Canadian job market remains weaker than it was before the crisis in October 2008. Unemployment has risen to 7.3%. The proportion of part-time workers and involuntary part-time workers has also risen rapidly. Full-time, permanent, family supporting jobs remain very difficult to find in many areas across the country. The real unemployment rate, which, of course, includes labour force dropouts and involuntary part-time workers, was at 11.1% in July of this year, up from 9.4% in July 2008.

How the government can sit on that side of the House and argue that our economy is recovering fine and that Canadians are doing well is absolutely beyond me.

What is more is that this bleak job market and lack of real opportunity is even worse for Canada's youth. An article that was published in the *Globe and Mail* earlier this week outlined details from a recent study on Canada's problem with unemployed and under-employed university graduates. These are our best and brightest and yet, this week, when I asked a question in the House about this exact topic, the members opposite did not stand and talk about what they were doing to actually create more jobs and give more opportunity to the most educated in our country. Instead, they stood and spoke about tax credits.

What good is a tax credit if people cannot make enough money to pay any income taxes? This, unfortunately, is the bleak situation facing many of our youth today. They do not have jobs that pay enough for them to pay income taxes. What kind of life is that?

In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, the number one issue that I hear at the doorstep of my constituents is jobs, jobs for our youth, jobs for our elderly, jobs. The riding of Scarborough—Rouge River does not have very much to offer in the way of jobs. Unfortunately, the reality for many of my constituents is that they must travel into the downtown core of Toronto for work. From our area, that is a minimum of about a two hour commute each way, which is a four hour commute in a day for many of my constituents. I used to do that myself. This means that people are spending four hours a day on public transport, which means four hours away from their families, an extra four hours a day that their kids must spend in day care or with other support, and four hours where we could be working at our second jobs to earn more income that we are not getting at our first job.

Business of Supply

● (1340)

What is worse is that many of my constituents do not work the regular 9 to 5. Many work shifts, overnight or into the wee hours of the morning, and then they must make that two hour trip back home on public transit which, at night time, can be even longer. This becomes an issue of public safety. When members of our families are waiting for buses on our street corners at all hours of the night, this is a huge concern, especially with the continuation of the proposed cuts to these services, especially transit in the greater Toronto area.

Many of the parents with whom I speak are very worried. They are worried about the welfare and the safety of their children. What messages are we sending to our youth when the only jobs available to them are part-time or shift work? What messages are we sending to our university graduates when, after spending years and thousands of dollars on earning a degree, they are forced into jobs that are greatly below their education standard. We know that our university grads are getting jobs at the low end of the income scale. What hope for tomorrow do we give these people?

This is another question I am often asked at the doorsteps of my constituency, unfortunately. My riding is one of the poorest in the GTA and yet many of the families who live in my area are spending their life savings or incurring extra and extreme amounts of debt to send their children to school to get that university degree or college diploma, only to have their children graduate and not be able to find jobs or only find severely underpaid jobs.

What financial risks now face those parents? What hope do they have for retirement? What is the quality of life for them in retirement when they spend all of their life savings on their children's education?

I am also asked about the children and people who forego post-secondary education and enter directly into the workforce to help their families put food on the table. These youths are forced into part-time work, shift work and many times unsafe work, but there is no other option for them. They do this to put food on their families' table.

Many youth in my constituency cannot find work at all, which is very challenging for a community that has the largest youth to population ratio in the entire greater Toronto area. This is a huge problem for me and for the constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River.

What are we saying to these youths who are already marginalized because of their age, their ethnicity, their status in the country and their household income? What are we telling them? Are we telling them that they are not worth planning for? Many of the families in my riding with children and youth in this situation are very worried. I hear this on a weekly basis when I knock the doors.

The government likes to talk about being tough on crime. Why does it not deal with the real root causes of crime? Why not provide our youth with a sense of importance and value? Why not provide them with opportunities like jobs and access to post-secondary education? Why not give them hope and real opportunities?

On this side of the House, we believe that our youth are the future of our great country and that, because of this, we need to provide for

our youth. We need to inspire them to be involved. We need to give them the opportunities to be successful, not just set them up to fail, which is, unfortunately, what I am seeing from the other side of the House.

Our youth, our university graduates and our college graduates need jobs. They need real jobs that will help them make ends meet, that will help them support their families and that will help them and their children lead better lives. That is what we, on this side of the House, are fighting for today.

● (1345)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing the riding where I was born and raised, beautiful Etobicoke North, and, like the member, our greatest challenge is jobs. We used to rank second in the country for manufacturing but it is disappearing.

In my constituency office, we review covering letters and resumé's. We teach job interviewing skills. We help with appropriate work attire. We find people jobs. I was also able to get a new jobs program for the community but it is not enough.

One young valedictorian youth, Dylan Thomas, said, "If you come from the wrong community, rage, rage". This is not the speech of someone embarking on a new future.

My community wants jobs. What specifically would the member recommend to the government to help our college and university students who have graduated and cannot find work?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaesan: Mr. Speaker, that is a very poignant question. Our university and college graduates are not getting good jobs and the government is showing absolutely no leadership in investing in post-secondary education, as well as the follow-through with graduates. That is, unfortunately, that big piece is missing. Just as we invest in the settlement of new immigrants, we need to invest in the method by which graduates will travel through the labour force. That type of investment is not being seen.

In speaking with university and college administrators, they would love that support from the government in order to invest in career and job development for their graduates. Unfortunately, the universities and colleges do not have that type of investment from the government.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a very graphic description of what it is like in communities across Canada. I come from Newton—North Delta and residents in my area face many problems similar to the ones that she articulated so eloquently.

Looking at the government's economic proposals and in listening to members talk about what is happening in their communities, it is very clear to me that there is a need to redress the priorities. Instead of big tax breaks to banks and oil companies, which are making bigger profits than ever, it is time for us to invest in small businesses. How would investments in small businesses help drive the economy in Canada and keep jobs here?

Business of Supply

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. Our small businesses are the engine behind our economy, especially behind the economic development of our communities. The government wants to give billions of dollars to large corporations that seem to be sending jobs away. It is giving money to corporations that are putting the money in their pockets but not hiring Canadians. They are mostly jobs that our university and college graduates would be able to do. It is the small and medium-sized businesses that are actually investing in and creating jobs in our local communities.

The government is going in the wrong direction. It should not be giving away billions of dollars to companies that are taking jobs and money out of our country. It should be investing in small and medium-sized businesses that are creating jobs in our communities in Canada.

• (1350)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to this important motion from the opposition, which calls on the government to start taking some action, to pay attention to what is going on in the country and to begin taking some specific action as it relates to the unemployed, to businesses that are struggling and to innovation.

I will take a few minutes to talk about trade because it is extraordinarily important. It is important that the government enter into discussions around trade with its eyes open. My concern is that the government has set itself a quota of trade deals that it has to get. It is going after these trade deals and negotiating them simply to get through them so it can say that it has another trade deal and another notch on its belt. There are some problems with that I am going to get there.

I want to talk about what we are hearing from the government benches. The government members stand and say what a great job they have done with the economic action plan. I was not here in the fall of 2008, but I watched from afar. The Minister of Finance came out after the election with an economic statement that said that everything was great, that we were gliding along perfectly, that people should not pay attention to all the economic turmoil beyond our borders, that everything was fine, that we would sail off into the next couple of years and that we did not need to do anything different. He said that there would not be any spending.

It took a near-death experience for the government. The opposition members came together and said that Canadians recognized that the economy in our country and around the world was in terrible trouble. It was only until they decided they would join forces to bring the government down that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister suddenly woke up and said that maybe something was wrong, that maybe they had better do something quickly. They even went to the extraordinary length of proroguing the House in order to avoid the decision of Parliament and also to give time for the Minister of Finance to find himself and recognize that there was some trouble in the U.S. economy and throughout Europe with the economy and maybe he should do something about it.

The Conservatives came up with the economic action plan, and they have been taking credit for that. However, we all know that it

was only when members of the opposition threatened to bring the government down, did it recognize it needed to invest in infrastructure spending. Yes, countries around the world have recognized that Canada has done a good job in that respect. However, every time the Minister of Finance stands, he almost breaks his arm as he tries to pat himself on the back and members opposite likewise applaud themselves. I cannot get over the level of hypocrisy coming from those members.

Given what happened three short years ago, it is incumbent upon the opposition to again try to jolt the Minister of Finance and his colleagues to recognize, as Canadians do, that there are serious problems out there. Members on this side talk about unemployment among youth. University graduates are building up greater student debt because of the lack of support from the federal government as is the case with the lack of support for provinces and universities. When they go out to try to prepare themselves for the work world and for the global economy, they find there are no jobs. There are no supports for innovation. There are no specific actions on behalf of the government to support our young people who are taking the time and incurring the debt to prepare themselves by increasing their training.

• (1355)

We have heard members on this side talk about innovation, about how the government needs to recognize the fact that it needs to support activities, ideas and those clusters of innovation that are developing in various parts of the country, to ensure those industries are in a position to not only create jobs, products and services that are innovative and world-class, but so they can then trade with the world. They need support so they can trade and exchange and build the economy of our country.

However, there is nothing. All we hear is the government saying that we may not have as many jobs as we had back in 2008, but we should not worry as Canada is doing better than the United States, Greece or Italy, so it is doing a great job.

The people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour do not think that is good enough. The people who come to my office, the people who just got out of university and are looking for work, are asking me what the government doing. Seniors who cannot find care and support in homes are wondering why the government has turned its back on them.

I had a meeting just the other day with a 72-year-old senior. He lives in Cole Harbour in subsidized housing in a seniors' complex. He lives on \$14,000 a year. The members might remember the debate we had in June about the difficulties of seniors living on such low pensions and the fact that the government was failing those seniors. Here is a guy who has taken it upon himself to try to find a part-time job working as a crossing guard three hours a day, three days a week, protecting children as they cross the street in Cole Harbour. Every dollar he makes is being clawed back. We have a senior who cannot make ends meet because of the paltry pensions that are paid by the government. He is trying to make ends meet but the measures the government brings hold him down.

Statements by Members

The reason why we have brought this resolution forward is to take the opportunity to remind the government that the action plan was not its idea. The government was forced into it. It was kicking and screaming at the reality of the fact that it needed to take action. I and members of the opposition are here to once again to say to the government that Canadians need it to act. Canadians need it to start making investments in its communities. Canadians need it not to turn its back on them, not to make phony polls or any of the rest of it on the government's website. They need the government to pay attention to the pain and struggles that people are experiencing in their communities. It needs to deal with the problems of infrastructure of the Champlain Bridge in Montreal.

Those are the realities. Those are the things the government needs to take action on to make a difference, so when the economy does turn around, Canada will be in a better position to move us forward and create the jobs that our young people need.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The period of questions and comments for the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour will take place after question period when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BRANTFORD VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Poland's modern history has been dominated by a burning sense of freedom among its people and to this the world bore witness as hundreds of thousands of Polish soldiers fought bravely alongside Canadians to free Europe from fascism and tyranny during World War II.

The Polish were instrumental to many of the greatest Allied triumphs, including the heroic Battle of Monte Cassino, which paved the way for the Allied to push to Rome. Brantford's Paul Lojko was there, and it was his vision to commemorate his fellow soldiers and Canadian comrades to ensure that their memory lives on.

On September 18 I participated in the culmination of that vision as the Brantford Polish combatants unveiled a new memorial to honour those soldiers and all those who endured hardships. A huge crowd gathered to attend the wonderful unveiling ceremony, making the dedication a very moving and lasting tribute.

It is our duty to never forget the sacrifices of our veterans. We will remember them.

* * *

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning cities all across Canada had the same problem: too many people watched buses go by or sat for hours in traffic. They were late for work. They were late for school. They wasted hours getting to their jobs while worrying about getting their kids to daycare.

It is happening in all of our cities. It is happening to people with high incomes and to people earning minimum wage. We are falling behind in public transit.

We are the only G8 country without a national public transit strategy, and it is hurting the economy and the environment. We need fast, accessible and affordable public transit in cities large and small across the country.

One could go downtown and ask people on the street if they would rather see a bigger prison or a better transit system. We need to focus on moving people forward, not locking them up.

Let us work together like other countries in the G8. Let us move Canada forward.

* * *

SAND PLAINS DEVELOPMENT FUND

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to highlight the great successes of the Sand Plains development fund in my riding of Oxford and across southwestern Ontario. The Sand Plains development fund was created by Canada's current government in August 2008, with a commitment of \$15 million to the region. Since its formation, there have been 202 full-time jobs created, 54 part-time jobs created, 119 seasonal jobs and 256 jobs sustained in the southwestern Ontario area.

More specifically, I would like to talk about the biomass project of Canadian Biofuel in my riding of Oxford. It was partially funded through the Sand Plains development fund. The project, located on a former Cargill grain elevator and feed mill facility, will now produce roughly 1,500 tonnes of biomass per month. Low in greenhouse gas emissions, it can be used to heat homes and even supplement coal in generating electricity.

Initially waste wood would be used to make the biomass fuel. However, the company plans to establish a local supply chain of raw materials by encouraging local farmers to grow miscanthus grass.

* * *

[Translation]

USERS' RIGHTS WEEK

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first Quebec health and social services network users' rights week, organized by the Regroupement provincial des comités des usagers. This promotional tool serves to inform users of their rights and to showcase the work being done within health and social services institutions.

Users' rights week gives all those who care about the quality of services in Quebec an opportunity to promote the rights of users and recognize the important work carried out by user and in-patient committees.

The health and social services network is not used only by sick people. It is also used by the worker who is out of a job, the pregnant woman, the young person at a drop-in centre, the person who wants to quit smoking, the person with a disability, the senior citizen living at home with the assistance of outside services. In short, you and I, all Quebecers, are users.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

ROYAL REGIMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Regiment of Canada, a regiment I am proud to have served in for the majority of my time in the military, will commemorate this storied regiment's participation in the Dieppe raid this evening.

On August 19, 1942, the Royals went ashore on Blue Beach, located at Puys. Unfortunately, nothing with that raid went right, and out of the 554 members of the regiment who landed, there were 227 casualties, 136 wounded and 264 POWs. Only 65 returned to England. Many were rescued by Polish naval captain Romuald Nalecz-Tyminski, who later became an admiral.

The plaque to the regiment at Puys reads:

You who are alive on this beach, remember that these men died far from home so that others, here and elsewhere, might freely enjoy life in God's mercy.

I ask all members to rise with me and applaud both the heroism of those brave soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Canada who landed at Dieppe and their regiment's commitment and service to Canada in the past, present and future.

Ready, aye, ready, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[Translation]

OTTERBURN BOATING CLUB

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the outstanding performance of the members of the Otterburn Boating Club who won a number of medals and set a new record at the Canadian championships, which were held this summer in Welland, Ontario.

I would like to congratulate Sarah-Jane Caumartin, who won no fewer than seven medals—three gold, three silver and one bronze. I would also like to congratulate Marianne Lévêque Brissette on her excellent performance. She won four medals—three gold and one silver.

Sarah-Jane and Marianne set a new record in the junior 1,000 C2 event, beating the old world junior record by 12 seconds. I would also like to congratulate Tasia Gelencser-Smith and Virginie Adam, who both won silver medals.

Their commodore, Daniel Caumartin, their coach, Daniel Bertrand, and all the residents of Chambly—Borduas, including myself, are very proud of these athletes from my riding.

Statements by Members

It is therefore an honour for me to recognize the outstanding performance of these young athletes from the Otterburn Boating Club.

* * *

[English]

JASPER DARK SKY FESTIVAL

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the beautiful riding of Yellowhead, something exceptional is going to happen in the month of October. This exceptional thing is the first annual dark sky festival.

In March, Jasper National Park became the world's largest dark sky preserve.

One might ask: what is a dark sky preserve? A dark sky preserve is an area established by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada to promote the visibility of night skies.

The federal government has invested a significant amount of money in our parks, which has created a significant number of jobs as well as an increase in tourism. A record number of Canadians and international tourists enjoyed beautiful Jasper this summer. This is significant to our economy, because tourism adds more to our GDP than agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting all combined. Jasper is an exceptionally beautiful place during the day, but in the evening the skies are breathtakingly beautiful.

Every Canadian should come out to Jasper. All Canadians should experience the beauty for themselves as we celebrate the very first dark sky festival.

* * *

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Canadians of Moldovan descent on this 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Moldova.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to dialogue with Moldovan Canadians in my riding, here on the Hill and across Canada.

While visiting Moldova this past July, I was fascinated both by how far it has come in 20 short years of freedom and how strong the will is to continue to build a democratic and vibrant society.

All members of the House are here as the result of a peaceful democratic process governed by the rule of law. Too often we take this for granted. Today I invite all hon. members to join me in congratulating our Moldovan Canadian friends and our colleagues the Honourable Veaceslav Ionita and Honourable Ivan Ionas from the Moldovan parliament, who are visiting today for the first time in history the Canadian Parliament in session, for 20 years of independence, 20 years of democracy and 20 years of progress.

God bless Canada and Moldova.

*Statements by Members***WAR RESISTERS**

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, decorated Iraq war veteran Rodney Watson has lived in limbo for two years in sanctuary at an East Vancouver church with his wife Natasha and young son Jordan, both Canadian citizens.

I have come to know Rodney and know him to be strong in his conviction for peace and justice, and brave in his commitment to go up against an illegal war. It has been a tough two years, and the strong support from the war resisters support campaign has been enormously important.

If Rodney were to return to the U.S., he would likely be charged, which would make his return to Canada inadmissible, tearing him apart from his family.

As many as 40 other war resisters like Rodney are currently fighting to stay in Canada. This Parliament has passed two motions in support of war resisters, yet the government is still trying to deport them.

I encourage Canadians to write to the immigration minister and their MPs about Rodney and all war resisters to support the call for their permanent residence in Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

WORLD HEART DAY

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Heart Day, a day to raise awareness of the impact that heart disease has on Canadians and all people around the world.

According to the World Heart Federation, over 17.3 million people die globally each year from cardiovascular diseases, particularly heart disease and stroke. Up to 80% of these diseases are preventable through healthy eating, physical activity, not smoking, and decreasing blood pressure levels.

This fall the Minister of Health participated in the United Nations summit on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. She stated there that “promoting good health is everyone’s business”.

I congratulate the Minister of Health for her recent announcement about Canada’s tougher tobacco packaging regulations.

I encourage all Canadians to be more physically active, to refrain from smoking and to choose healthy foods.

On World Heart Day, let us reflect on the importance of heart health and make the necessary lifestyle changes to lead healthier lives.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the sacrifices and contributions of Canada’s 7,500 correctional officers. They are here in Ottawa this week with their concerns.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the founding of Union of Canadian Correctional Officers. They have worked hard to gain the

recognition that correctional officers do not often receive in an environment that is usually hidden from the public view. It is a workplace that is also becoming more dangerous.

In particular, I would like to draw members’ attention to the petition campaign that correctional officers launched this week to support their call for action on issues of workers being exposed to HIV and hepatitis C. I am very concerned about their workplace safety.

In closing, I hope all members will join me in a salute to the work and courage of correctional officers, and I hope we can work together to ensure a safer working environment for their members

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government received a strong mandate from the Canadian people and is now delivering on its promise to introduce the important Safe Streets and Communities Act.

People in my community of Brampton are worried about the deadly effects of drugs and gang violence. Cultural communities worry about their children being targeted by drug pushers and thugs. This is a growing concern.

That is why the cultural communities voted for their values in the last election. They voted for getting tough on crime and for safer streets.

I urge the Liberal and NDP parties to listen to the concerns of Canadians from communities most affected by crime, such as the South Asian community. Let us pass this bill. Let us get tough on crime. Let us get on with the work Canadians expect of us.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday I attended an event held by the Société culturelle québécoise des sourds, and I saw how important it is to understand the reality of the 310,000 deaf and 2.8 million hard-of-hearing Canadians. Barely 20% of deaf people work full-time. Nearly 42% are underemployed and more than 37% are unemployed.

The UN recognizes how significant this is, given that the deaf community has a prominent place in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Although this convention was signed and ratified by Canada, the optional protocol that would enable persons with disabilities to complain has not been. The deaf must have ways to speak out against the government when it does not fulfill its commitments.

It is time to make an effort to support these people, many of whom may be confronted with challenges every day. Education is needed here.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the NDP member for Surrey North made the outrageous statement that our Conservative government was “callously jeopardizing public safety”.

The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca said that we were playing fast and loose with the safety of the people of British Columbia.

These comments are ridiculous, coming from members who just yesterday put the safety of their constituents at risk by voting to give convicted arsonists house arrest, to keep soft sentences for those who sell drugs to children, to give a slap on the wrist to gangsters who run big marijuana grow operations and, even more shamefully, to allow child molesters to get pardons.

Unlike the opposition, our government has a strong track record of getting tough on crime. That is why this spring Canadians gave us a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe. It is high time the opposition stopped putting the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of law-abiding Canadians.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured today to draw attention to the difficult commitment undertaken by our Canadian troops on Afghan soil during Rotation 10 of Joint Task Force Afghanistan, which took place from October 2010 to July 2011. We ought to commend and applaud the sacrifices and efforts made during this mission.

In 2001, when Canada became involved in this mission, Canadians already suspected that our involvement would be long and arduous. In total, 10 years went by before we considered our work to be done.

Tomorrow there will be a ceremony at Valcartier to mark our soldiers' return. They lived up to the Canadian promise. We can all celebrate their work, be proud of it and honoured by it as well.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday morning, Corporal Kim MacKellar of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, serving in Yukon's small community of Haines Junction, was shot at while responding to a robbery at the town's grocery store. Store employee, Frank Parent, was pepper-sprayed and beaten by the assailants prior to the ensuing pursuit that resulted in the shooting.

The two accused are now charged with multiple offences, including attempted murder. One of the suspects was walking the streets while on a court-ordered condition and had a lengthy criminal history.

Oral Questions

The NDP would have Canadians believe that the accused is the real victim. The NDP and the Liberals complain that the accused will be double-bunked and have no access to support in prison and would be further victimized.

Frank Parent and Corporal MacKellar are the victims, as is the community of Haines Junction.

This government makes no mistake about who the real victims are in cases like this. Our government has the resolve and commitment to see that necessary action to support victims of crime are protected in Bill C-10.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Frank Parent and Corporal MacKellar for a speedy recovery.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wants to cut services instead of investing in infrastructure. The President of the Treasury Board, who has his own spending problems, has lost all credibility. He plans to cut hundreds of thousands of jobs by reducing public services. Economists are saying that is the wrong thing to do when we are on the verge of a recession.

Why is the Prime Minister insisting on cutting public services, yet in January he gave the most profitable corporations a gift of \$4 billion?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has invested a record amount in Canadian infrastructure across the country. That is one of the reasons why analysts support our economic action plan, which is creating an impressive number of jobs in Canada. But again, when it is up to the NDP to make a suggestion, the only thing the leader of the opposition proposes is to increase taxes. This government is against increasing job-killing taxes.

* * *

GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is asking people to tighten their belts, to do without essential services, but his ministers are doing the contrary. The President of the Treasury Board thinks the consolidated revenue fund is all his and has wasted \$50 million in his riding. The Minister of National Defence uses government aircraft for taxis and spends \$3 million on private jets.

Does the Prime Minister see how his call for austerity lacks credibility when his ministers are behaving like this?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. As far as the Minister of National Defence is concerned:

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The defence minister has used government aircraft 70% less than his opposition predecessors and, when he has used them, it has been for important government business. Half of those flights were for repatriation ceremonies, so he could meet the families of those who had lost their loved ones in the service of this country. He goes there to show that we understand their sacrifice, we share their pain and we care about them. That is why the Minister of National Defence is so highly regarded on this side of the House.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, high unemployment is costly to Canada and nowhere is it clearer than in aboriginal communities.

The National Council of Welfare says that the higher unemployment of aboriginals is costing Canada's economy more than \$35 billion a year in lost production and billions more in lost tax revenue.

When will the government build the economy by investing in communities instead of cutting public services?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. In the government's economic action plan, we made important infrastructure investments in aboriginal communities, and in the most recent budget, the measures of which are still finding their way through this Parliament. We have made important investments specifically in training aboriginal people for the jobs that exist.

I think what aboriginal Canadians would especially support would be if the NDP would support those positive measures for aboriginal people.

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*[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are 350,000 more unemployed Canadians today than there were before the last recession, which the minister did not see coming, either. That means 350,000 more workers who are not bringing home salaries to provide for their families, and billions of dollars lost in salaries and economic incentives.

What does the minister have to say to those families? That it is their fault and that he will not do anything about it?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government, as it has been for years now, remains focused on jobs and on the economy. The economic action plan arising out of budget 2009, which was a very difficult time for the global economy, resulted in the growth of about 600,000 net new jobs in Canada, which is a record in the G7. Our performance job wise is that it leads the G7. We have strong fiscal and economic fundamentals in Canada. I know the NDP wants to raise taxes but we think that is the wrong way to go.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as for jobs being created, the government is afraid to tell Canadians the

truth. We are just barely ahead of where we were in May 2008 before the recession, about 200,000 new jobs, which are far less than this minister claims.

The problem is that the labour force is growing. There are an additional 435,000 Canadians who need work. The truth is that the government has done nothing for most of them. Its job creation record is a failure.

When will the government stop cutting essential services and start—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we need to be concerned, if we pay attention to the world, as I am sure the member opposite does, about deficits and debts and accumulated deficits. We can see the harm that is causing in other parts of the world and the difficulties that populations will go through because of accumulated public deficits over time.

This is not what we want to do in Canada. We have a plan to bring us back to balanced budgets. We will stay on that track in the medium term to get back to balanced budgets in Canada, and we will not increase taxes to do it.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's last economic statement was the budget in June, which was four months ago, and, during those four months, the IMF has downgraded Canada's growth, the TD Bank says that another recession is likely, Statistics Canada says that the economy is already shrinking, Scotia Bank says that Canada may be the first to be hit again, and BMO says that Hoover-like austerity planning will only make things worse.

When will the government present an urgent economic update to acknowledge how things have worsened and that austerity alone is not the right path?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous member, when he was finance minister, we do not do multiple budgets in a single year.

The government, obviously, is looking at economic circumstances very carefully. The government already has an important number of proactive measures through the economic action plan to support the Canadian economy.

However, if the hon. member is suggesting that today the government should massively expand the Canadian deficit, I do not think the facts support that argument.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the June budget is already out of date. A summer full of economic decline has overtaken the small measures from that budget to be introduced only belatedly next week. It is all too little, too late and out of touch.

Will the government produce a new economic update before mid-October? Will that update include at least some new budget measures? Will it cancel its \$1.2 billion in extra EI payroll taxes, which it will slap on small business beginning January 1?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government ran on an economic action plan just recently that was strongly supported by the Canadian people.

The Liberal Party forced an election over that and we know what the result was. After that result, the Liberal Party is truly out of touch when its members are back saying exactly the same things they were saying before the election.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

M. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the economy, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities keeps saying that his government is spending money on the Champlain Bridge. Let us be clear: that money is being spent to maintain a crumbling bridge, not to replace it.

What we want is to see the bridge replaced entirely, and heaven knows this is urgently needed.

Can this government immediately commit to launch a project to replace the Champlain Bridge and ensure adequate financing, yes or no?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Champlain Bridge was certainly not of any concern to the previous government, which, for 13 years, did absolutely nothing for the Champlain Bridge.

Since coming to power, we have been taking the Champlain Bridge issue very seriously. Of course, before we can even think about a new structure, whatever that may be, we must ensure that the existing bridge continues to support the current traffic and that it remains safe. That is what we are doing and the Champlain Bridge is safe.

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[English]

MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians brace for another recession, we learn that our defence minister continues his ethically challenged ways. He has racked up nearly \$3 million jetting around the country.

The government will not invest in infrastructure, in health care or jobs, but it will invest millions in making that minister the frequent flyer champion of government jets.

When will the government ground that high flying minister?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to get that question from the hon. member. As I pointed out, the minister uses the Challenger 70% less than his predecessors and half the time he does that it is for repatriation ceremonies.

What I would expect from the hon. member is for him to ask how he could join the Minister of National Defence and also participate in those ceremonies for Canadian families.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps some facts can help the Prime Minister answer the questions more accurately. Most of the flights were not for repatriation of fallen soldiers, only nine of the thirty-five. There was a flight from a fishing trip at camp Crosbie to a lobster festival in Halifax and Challenger trips to photo ops for government spending announcements. He even took a jet to Vancouver to the same event to which another minister flew commercial.

When will the Prime Minister tell members of his cabinet that ethics rules apply to them too? When will he crack down on this out of control, jet-setting Conservative lifestyle?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is the Minister of National Defence has participated in some 55 repatriation ceremonies for over 80 lost Canadian service personnel. The facts are also, as the House knows well and the member knows well, when he refers to the vacation, this was something the minister paid for himself.

When the member asks these kinds of questions and behaves this way, he reflects on his own character, not on that of the Minister of National Defence.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2008, the cost of Challenger jet flights taken by the Minister of National Defence represented 17% of the total for all departments. In 2009, it was 34%; in 2010, it was 60%, and in 2011, it was 32%.

Why did the Minister of National Defence travel so frequently on the Challenger when, I believe, other ministers such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance travel just as much?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can repeat my answer. This minister uses government aircraft 70% less than his predecessors. Half the time, he does so to attend repatriation ceremonies for soldiers who gave their lives for our country. That is why we have such great respect for the Minister of National Defence on this side of the House of Commons.

Oral Questions

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first we learned that the minister used a Cormorant helicopter as his personal taxi in Newfoundland. Now, we have learned that his Challenger flights cost the taxpayers \$3 billion.

Will the minister stop wasting Canadians' money on luxuries? Will the Prime Minister take steps to address extravagant spending by his ministers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this minister uses the Challenger for government business, not personal business. Those are the facts. When this minister pays his respects to the families of our fallen soldiers I expect the official opposition to support us and the minister by showing respect for these families.

* * *

[English]

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now 112 days and counting and here is something new about the Muskoka boondoggle. When the mayor set out to buy steel for the hockey arena, even though it had not been approved by Parliament, the Muskoka minister did not tell him to wait. He wrote, "Hey, thanks for the update, Claude. Is it possible to go ahead with the purchase without making an official announcement? Otherwise I would be put in an uncomfortable position".

It is not just uncomfortable, it is wrong. He cannot spend taxpayer dollars on the sly. If the minister disagrees with this assessment, then maybe he should stand and explain to Parliament why.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was so much enthusiasm about Canada's economic action plan, there was so much enthusiasm about infrastructure projects around the country that the mayor was prepared to put the steel on his own credit card because he was so excited to create jobs in that part of the country. That happened from coast to coast to coast, great partnerships with the provinces, with territories, with municipalities from every part of the country, all coming together to fight the recession.

For my friend from Timmins, the good news is that at the end of the day we saw more jobs, more hope and more opportunity.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Parliament was misled. This is a guy who was buying steel for a hockey arena with border infrastructure money that had not even been approved by Parliament. It is the minister's emails, his influence peddling and his misuse of the taxpayers dollars.

If this was good news, why did he tell the mayor to keep his mouth shut? This is about an abuse of public trust. It has been 112 days of this charade of hiding behind the foreign affairs minister. Will that member stand and come clean to the Canadian people?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of muckraking that Canadians rejected in the last election campaign. This is just same old, same old.

The Canadian people want us to focus on jobs and the economy. They want us to focus on economic growth. They want us to focus on ensuring there are more opportunities for their children and

grandchildren. That is what this government is doing. That is the leadership that the Minister of Finance has provided. That is why he was named the best finance minister in the world last year.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the NDP revealed new information about the unsavoury activities of the President of the Treasury Board and his slush fund. He siphoned off \$17 million to build an Olympic-sized arena in Huntsville. His constituency office distributed taxpayer money for secret projects. He even managed to find a job for a friend. What an obliging minister. Meanwhile, the Ontario Provincial Police is investigating the Gravenhurst project, a project in which he was also involved.

Will the minister finally answer questions about his management of public money in his riding?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the project the member opposite refers to in Gravenhurst has nothing to do with the G8 legacy fund. I would challenge the member opposite, if he wants to accuse any member of this place of anything unethical, to have the courage and the guts to go outside and repeat those scurrilous allegations.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was expecting the same from the President of the Treasury Board. He should have the courage to rise in the House and answer our questions.

I think that I expressed myself clearly and in proper French. The question had to do with the management of funds in the riding of the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and not the management of the funds at the Department of Foreign Affairs, unless we have reason to look into the situation there as well.

The NDP revealed new information this week. Can the government at least change its tape and respond to the new discoveries we have revealed?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has just revealed the same old, same old. If the member opposite would like to make any allegations of anything untoward, he should have the courage to do it outside this place.

The bottom line is that I approved 32 projects under this fund. All 32 projects were for public infrastructure. They all came in on or under budget. Every dollar has been accounted for. The good news is a lot of jobs and a lot of hope and opportunity were created with those infrastructure projects.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a single mother, I have very busy days. Between helping my son with his homework, making meals, rushing to drop him off at school, going to the office and returning to pick him up on time, the last thing I want is to hear about the mismanagement of public funds at the G8 summit.

The minister who will not answer questions and refuses to take responsibility. Is that really the example we want to set for our children?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue has been thoroughly aired before, during and after the last election campaign. The Auditor General has come forward with some positive observations on how the government could do an even better job at being more open and transparent. The government has accepted all those recommendations and will continue to work constructively with the Auditor General to constantly raise the bar to do an even better job for hard-working taxpayers.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): When there are continuing efforts to curtail Canada's judiciary, the Conservatives may have gone too far. At the ethics committee on Tuesday, the member for Peterborough, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister said, in reference to federal court Judge Boivin, "This specific judge has looked at all the evidence before him, and he has rendered a decision. I think it's important that the committee hears about that decision and why he came to it".

That is how the member justifies calling a judge before a committee, breaking a long-standing practice and principle of judiciary autonomy. Would the Prime Minister care to comment?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the efforts of the member for Peterborough are to follow through on his commitment to his constituents and our government's commitment to Canadians, which is to ensure that there is transparency in the way the taxpayer dollars are being spent by the CBC. That is what the effort is at the committee. Members of the committee are free to invite whomever they want at committee and the committee is free to accept the testimony or not.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is flouting the separation of powers, a fundamental principle of good governance. In 1989, the Supreme Court of Canada said that federal judges have the right to refuse to explain their decisions to legislators. Ed Ratushny, an expert in constitutional law, says that he cannot even comprehend how the Conservatives could imagine forcing a judge to appear before a committee.

Does the Prime Minister support his parliamentary secretary's affront to our democracy and to judicial autonomy?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government supports the efforts of the member for Peterborough to ensure that the CBC is

Oral Questions

transparent and accountable for the money it spends and that its books are open in order to be sure that it can find the necessary savings to balance its budget as quickly as possible.

• (1440)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous that the Minister of the Environment is attacking scientists by launching an international witch hunt to track down the whistleblower who revealed the government's cuts to the ozone monitoring network. We think Canada would be better served by his trying to prevent cuts to this fundamental program.

Why will the government not just admit that it is drastically weakening the ability of Environment Canada to do its job?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject absolutely reject the assumptions of my colleague's question. She is doing her research in the media. I have talked to my deputy minister and he has assured me that the story is a complete mischaracterization of his conversation.

Canada continues to monitor the ozone in its various forms. We have an important role to ensure that our research-based approach toward ozone monitoring contributes to the world's understanding of this critical fact.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is preventing Environment Canada from protecting Canadians from climate change and pollution. This year, the budget was cut by 59%. The report from the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy is a warning about the disastrous consequences this government's out-of-touch policies will have on our economy.

If the minister refuses to act to save the environment, will he at least act to save the economy?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, I know the NDP has trouble following the budget process and I would ask my colleague to wait for the supplementary estimates, which are due next month.

With regard to the report that she refers to, my colleague knows well that our government has a plan, a very good plan, to meet our target of reducing greenhouse gases by 17% from 2005 base levels by 2020.

We are moving forward to reduce greenhouse gases and, at the same time, we are investing in programs to help Canadians adapt to climate change.

Oral Questions

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the facts. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy just reported that without immediate government action, climate change could cost Canada \$5 billion a year by 2020. By 2050, the government inaction could cost Canadians up to \$43 billion a year. Our coastal communities, our forestry industry and the health of Canadians will all suffer unless we take action right now. Yet this out of touch government has produced no plan to deal with the impact of climate change on Canadians.

Where is the plan?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that my colleague is so surprised by these projections and these numbers. Today's report merely echoes what our government has long recognized, and that is the importance of adaptation to climate change.

Budget 2011, most recently, for example, included a \$58 million investment to continue to support federal programs aimed at helping Canadians adapt to climate change.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is time to learn to swim.

[Translation]

It is sad to see how ridiculous the situation at Environment Canada is becoming. The deputy minister will go to any lengths to discover which scientists disclosed the planned cuts to the ozone monitoring program. It is a witch hunt.

Why is this government putting scientists under the microscope instead of encouraging their vital work?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my NDP colleague, as well as my Liberal colleague, to do a little more original research rather than rely on flawed media reports.

As I have said, my deputy minister has rejected that story as a complete mischaracterization of his conversation.

Canadians elected a strong, stable, environmentally responsible Conservative majority government to take care of the environment, and that is exactly what we are doing.

• (1445)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish the government were as interested in the environment as it is in stifling dissent.

First the government denied that its cuts were going to have any impact on Canadians and then it went on a witch hunt. It went after whistleblower scientists who revealed the serious health and environmental impacts of these cuts.

When will the minister take a break from hunting down whistleblowers and actually tell us about how these cuts will affect Canadians?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject completely the several assumptions in my colleague's question.

Environment Canada makes no apologies at all for finding the most cost-effective ways of protecting both the environment and Canadian jobs.

* * *

SENIORS

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to celebrate what Canadian seniors have done and continue to do for our country. They deserve our gratitude and recognition. That is why the House passed a bill last year to officially establish October 1 as National Seniors Day.

Would the hon. Minister of State for Seniors tell the House what the government has done and continues to do to help seniors?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, on October 1 we will recognize the many contributions seniors have made as leaders in strengthening our families and communities.

Our government has a strong record of action to improve the quality of life of seniors, including additional funding for seniors programs and the largest increase in the GIS in a quarter century.

Together let us recognize the many seniors who give so generously of themselves to make this the best country in the world.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, macular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss for Canadian seniors. It affects thousands of people.

The government agency in charge of evaluating drug costs is recommending a drug that costs seniors a staggering \$1,500 a month instead of a drug which costs only \$7 a month. Experts say these drugs are virtually identical.

Why is the government choosing to drain seniors' pocketbooks?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of affordable access to drugs as part of our quality health care system.

We work with the provinces and the territories, which are responsible for deciding which drugs are publicly covered. That is why we have consistently increased transfers to the provinces and territories, by over 30% since we formed government, so that they can continue to meet the health care needs of their residents.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a government agency that is making these recommendations.

Clearly, switching to a cheaper drug would give seniors a much needed break and would save the government around \$100 million a year.

I am sure the minister is aware of reports saying that the drug manufacturer is manipulating the supply to favour the costlier drug.

Why does the government continue to allow drug recommendations based on corporate profits and not on what is best for Canadians? Where is the plan for making drugs more affordable?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of the provinces and territories to decide whether or not to provide their residents with a publicly financed drug therapy.

Many jurisdictions already offer catastrophic drug coverage to their residents. We have continued to increase the funding to the provinces and territories. Each jurisdiction will then decide how those dollars are allocated to meet their residents' needs.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women's rights should not be open for debate, yet members of the government seem to think they are. The Supreme Court of Canada has clearly ruled that access to abortion is a fundamental right.

Either the Prime Minister has lost control of his caucus or his government's new policy is to outlaw abortion and turn back the clock on women's rights. Which is it?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many individuals across this country and on all sides of the House have passionate feelings about this issue. However, the government has been clear. We will not reopen this question.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the impression today that we have literally gone back 20 years to a time when another Conservative government wanted to again criminalize abortion. This is not the first time that a member of the Conservative caucus has attempted to attack women's rights. This is becoming routine.

Will the Prime Minister put an end to these attempts and guarantee, once and for all, women's right to choose?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have no intention of reopening this debate.

* * *

[English]

G8 SUMMIT

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board refuses every day to answer questions in the House about his actions regarding the G8 legacy fund, but says now that he will appear before a committee. Canadians will be outraged if this is just another ruse to avoid scrutiny.

Oral Questions

When the minister does appear before the Conservative controlled committee, will all of his comments be in a public session? Will he agree to answer questions from all MPs? Will he finally answer for himself and stop using the foreign affairs minister as his mouth-piece?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Yes, yes and yes, Mr. Speaker, although I would be pleased to join the President of the Treasury Board at the committee as well and provide any helpful insight that I might have to offer to members who have questions.

* * *

SRI LANKA

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last days of the civil war, the Government of Sri Lanka killed thousands of Tamil non-combatant refugees. International and United Nations human rights organizations have condemned the Sri Lankan government's cover-up. The government did nothing when thousands of people were butchered.

Will the Prime Minister take steps today to urge the Commonwealth to revoke Sri Lanka's membership until it holds the perpetrators to account and they are judged in international courts? Will he support calls from the international community for action against the Sri Lankan government?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can say that the Prime Minister has spoken out loudly and clearly on this very important issue of human rights. I have certainly relayed the Government of Canada's position to both the high commissioner and directly to my counterpart, the minister of foreign affairs of Sri Lanka, to express our concerns on the lack of accountability for the serious allegations of war crimes, the lack of reconciliation with the Tamil community and with events that have taken place since the end of the civil war.

Canada will continue to speak loudly and clearly on behalf of human rights around the world, especially in Sri Lanka.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not seem to have a handle on its own tired talking points. Threatening to pull police off B.C.'s streets is not tough on crime. Issuing ultimatums to take it or leave it will not make our communities safe. Bullying the provinces is not leadership.

Will the minister stop playing games with public safety in British Columbia?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps what the member could do is start supporting some legislation that protects the people of British Columbia. In fact, in his riding people are concerned about crime.

Oral Questions

As for the issue of the B.C. RCMP contract, there have been four years of intensive negotiations. The same fundamental terms and conditions that have been offered to British Columbia other provinces have accepted. Saskatchewan and Alberta have accepted and have said this is a good deal. Now it is up to British Columbia. It can accept the agreement, or it can choose other alternatives.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all British Columbians are asking for is a fair deal on policing, one with more community input and better accountability. Instead, they are being offered ultimatums again today and a dangerously out-of-touch approach of one size fits all provinces.

While the government insults its opponents with cheap shots and threatens the Government of British Columbia, will the minister instead commit to negotiate in good faith and will the minister commit to stay at the table until a fair deal is reached?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been negotiating with the British Columbia government for four years. Other provinces have recognized that the agreement is a fair one. It is certainly cost effective for them, and they have accepted.

After four years of intensive negotiations, I have indicated to the minister in British Columbia to bring forward the matters that she wants brought forward. She has not done that at this point. There is still some time. I am waiting. I have not heard from her.

The time is coming to an end. November 30 is the date by which she must make up her mind on behalf of the people of B.C.

* * *

• (1455)

COPYRIGHT

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, strong copyright laws protect jobs and ensure our economy remains strong. Our government's copyright reform is widely supported by consumers, creators and the businesses that drive Canada's economy.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House about the copyright modernization act?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we said in the campaign and in the throne speech, the focus of our government this fall is on economic growth and ensuring there is job growth as well. That is why we have tabled our copyright reform legislation.

Bill C-11, the copyright modernization act, balances the interests of consumers and creators with the central goal of drawing investment into Canada, protecting jobs and ensuring that we move forward.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce agrees with our bill. It said that this bill "lays the foundation for future economic growth and job creation". Françoise Bertrand of le Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec said that this bill is "critical to ensuring a competitive and stable business environment in Canada".

This bill has been tabled and we hope for its adoption. We hope for the opposition's support for Canadian jobs.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Canadian Forces member receives \$13,000 for funeral costs. A veteran receives \$3,600. Nineteen months ago we raised this issue. The answer we received was that it was under review.

Last year we asked the minister again to fix this problem. Even though his own officials raised it with him, he told a Senate hearing that it was not the time to talk about the matter. Yesterday we received another non-answer.

Our veterans have done their job. They served and defended Canada. Why will the minister not do his and fix the situation now?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to say that on this side of the House we not only speak for veterans, but we act for veterans.

As I told the member yesterday, this program is managed by the Last Post Fund. It is doing an outstanding job. We fund the Last Post Fund.

We are making sure that every military member who is killed or injured during service, whatever his or her rank, is well-served and will be treated with respect until the last moment of his or her life.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States Internal Revenue Service is going after innocent Canadians. The IRS is now going after Canadian citizens who have been playing by the rules, living and paying their taxes in Canada, in some cases for decades. It is going after them for thousands of dollars. These are not tax cheats.

Why is the government not doing more to protect these law-abiding citizens?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made it clear to the American authorities that Canada of course is not a tax haven, that the request for information from American citizens who are living in Canada affects a large number of citizens who have never earned income in the United States and many of whom were not aware of their obligation under American law, which is their right to file income tax returns.

We have asked the Americans to exercise some discretion in the IRS with respect to these demands.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, advocates of the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly have been waging a dirty, underhanded campaign against our government's strong mandate to deliver on our election promise of marketing freedom. They have tried every trick in the book, including wasting thousands of dollars on illegitimate surveys and travelling road shows.

Allen Oberg, the chair of the CWB, even used farmers' money to host and pay for a breakfast for the NDP caucus in Quebec City, telling the NDP members to use any means necessary to disrupt the democratic process in this chamber.

Could the minister tell us what steps he has taken to help western Canadian farmers?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Medicine Hat for his tireless work on behalf of farmers and the great work that the panel did.

The old Canadian Wheat Board, as my colleague outlined, is doing everything possible to fight marketing freedom, even refusing our offer to co-chair this industry working group. That is unfortunate.

Our government will use the recommendations of this dynamic working group to make sure farmers have the clarity and certainty they need for their farm businesses' future.

As of October 1, the government's advance payment program will be administered by the Canadian Canola Growers Association.

Our government has a strong mandate and we will deliver on marketing freedom.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night, I joined MPs from all parties in hosting a screening of the documentary, *Sri Lanka's Killing Fields*. It moved me, as it did everyone else there.

Sadly, Canada and the rest of the world has stood idly by for far too long. Human rights organizations around the world are calling upon the United Nations to launch an independent inquiry into the possibility of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sri Lanka.

A Conservative MP helped sponsor the event last night. Will his government now stand in the House today and finally commit to fighting for justice for Sri Lankans and call for a United Nations inquiry?

• (1500)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we did not sit idly by at the United Nations on Monday where I brought the plight of human rights violations to the floor of the General Assembly. The Prime Minister did not sit idly by when he expressed grave concern about attending a future summit of the Commonwealth in Colombo. We did not sit idly by when we spoke with the high commissioner to Sri Lanka and raised our concerns. I did not sit idly by last week when I met with the foreign minister of Sri Lanka to express our significant concerns.

Business of the House

We have not sat idly by. We will continue to stand up, do the right thing and fight for human rights around the world, especially in Sri Lanka.

* * *

[Translation]

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Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, multinationals and the software industry will be pleased with the copyright bill the government is introducing today, but it will cost artists close to \$75 million a year. By attacking the livelihood of creators in this way, the Conservatives are showing that, for them, culture comes down to profit for big business.

Is the government aware that the copyright legislation that it is proposing will harm artists and weaken Quebec culture?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we introduced a bill that is fair to everyone, both creators and consumers. What artists across the country need right now is copyright legislation that will make piracy illegal in Canada. That is what Bill C-11 will do.

We are also imposing the WIPO Internet treaties. Many aspects of this bill protect the interests of Canada's artists, ensure that our economy continues to recover, and ensure that we are creating employment and investments here in Canada for everyone, including creators.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as is often the case, we would like to know what the plans are for the rest of the week. In particular, the official opposition would like to know when the government will finally bring before the House its so-called priorities, that is, the economy and jobs. It seems we have seen everything but the economy and jobs since they arrived.

It is thanks to the NDP official opposition that today the House is debating, for the first time this fall, the economic issues that are so important to worried Canadians. We are debating a motion calling on the government to take action on the economy, to establish a plan to create real jobs for Canadians and their families, to address Canada's infrastructure deficit of over \$100 billion, which is mortgaging our future and that of future generations, and to protect people's retirement pensions.

Now the NDP has proposed concrete actions to address these issues and I am sure the government will support them.

Business of Supply

Also, could the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons tell us when we can expect the debate on the amendments the government is proposing to the Copyright Act?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the global economy still fragile, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to continue our focus on the economic recovery. In the next week, our government will continue to implement the economic action plan that will create more jobs and economic growth. This plan is working.

[English]

Today, we introduced the copyright modernization act. The bill would promote innovation, keep Canada's digital economy strong and, importantly, help create jobs. I hope the bill will have the support of all hon. members.

Next week, we will be introducing a bill to implement the remaining measures in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth, as the finance minister indicated yesterday. The bill will include important economic measures, including a tax credit for the creation of new jobs by small businesses.

[Translation]

As per the order passed by the House yesterday, we will be introducing and voting on the ways and means motion relating to that second budget implementation act on Monday.

● (1505)

[English]

I know the opposition has shown great interest in seeing our jobs plan rolled out. Next week, members will have the opportunity to support it and move it swiftly through second reading and get this important bill to committee as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Next Tuesday will be designated as the second allotted day. Tomorrow we will begin debate on Bill C-7, the Senate Reform Act. This bill will allow and encourage provinces to hold elections to fill Senate seats and create a nine-year term limit for senators.

[English]

We will also continue debate on Bill C-4, Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act. Both bills will also be debated on Monday.

These important bills all have a very long history before the House, so I do encourage all hon. members to put aside further parliamentary delay tactics and give members a chance to vote on them and allow them to proceed through our system.

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POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a statement delivered today by the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, I was accused, along with the member for Surrey North, of supporting child molesters.

As an adult survivor of child abuse, I rise on this point of order and demand an immediate withdrawal by the member and to ask the Speaker to review the statement.

The Speaker: I will certainly review the statement and come back to the House if necessary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADIAN ECONOMY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: When we were debating this before question period, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour had five minutes left for questions and comments.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the NDP said with great interest and it reminded me of what the sainted Margaret Thatcher once said that, “socialism works until you run out of other people's money to spend”.

That side of the House is really good at spending other people's money. In fact, I think the saying is “spending ourselves rich”. When one looks at what is happening in the eurozone, that is obviously a strategy that simply cannot work. A sound economy is built upon the enforcement of property rights, the rule of law and a climate for business investment.

I would like to offer the House a quote, and members will be very curious as to where it came from. The quote is, “If the federal government reduces corporate taxes, it will make a difference for our businesses and certainly they will take advantage of those cuts and if it means more jobs we would be very happy with that. Do I think it will make a difference for Manitoba if the federal taxes are cut? Yes, it will make a difference for businesses and that is—

The Speaker: Order, please. I must stop the member there to allow the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour a chance to respond.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will not go back and talk about Margaret Thatcher at this point, although I know she nearly drove Britain's economy into the toilet.

Where was the member when the opposition forced the finance minister in the fall of 2008 to go back to the drawing board and try to figure out that there was a calamity happening in the economy and that he needed to come out with a policy in order to make the economy in Canada at least sustainable through that recessionary period? Why is it that he is not supporting that kind of action today by supporting our motion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get some clarification on an issue with respect to the New Democratic Party.

First, I would say that it initially was the Liberal Party that began this session by saying that jobs were the number one priority. Therefore, we appreciate the motion that is before us. However, there is a policy discrepancy that I would like clarification on.

There are the buy American provisions that have been implemented in the United States, on which the Conservatives have dropped the ball. The New Democrats have been somewhat quiet. The Ontario NDP is now saying, "buy Ontario".

What is the federal NDP's position on the whole buy American provisions? How does it compare that to the position of its provincial counterparts, or cousins, in regards to buy Ontario?

• (1510)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I must say that whenever I engage in any discussion with the federal Liberals as it relates to the economy, all I can do is remember the kind of damage they did in the province of Nova Scotia back in 1996-97 when they decided to balance the budget in those days on the backs of the universities, the poor, the people looking for social housing and the health care system.

That is the kind of wrong-headedness that we are trying to deal with in this particular motion. We want the government to recognize that it needs to step forward and start making the kinds of investments that are necessary to get people back to work.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have often heard that the Minister of Finance was the best minister of finance in the world. That was in 2009. Here we are in 2011 and it is Wayne Swan, a minister in Australia, who is the best finance minister in the world.

I would like to ask the hon. member how the NDP would move Canada forward in terms of its economy.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the first thing we would do is listen to Canadians and Canadians are telling us that it is time to start investing in communities, that it is time to start investing in infrastructure, and that it is time to start committing ourselves to supporting the innovation that is necessary in the communities to get people back to work and to get our young people coming out of universities with training and knowledge back to work.

Those are the kinds of specific steps that the government needs to do. It is what a New Democratic government would do.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the outset, I will reassure Canadians that our Conservative government's top priority is what matters to them, and that is jobs—

Business of Supply

Mr. Andrew Scheer: I wonder if someone could do their colleague a favour and turn their phone off so we can hear the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I will pick up at jobs in the economy because I think since I was elected in 2008, it is consistently what our government has actually talked about.

Indeed, with the global economic recovery so fragile, as demonstrated by the ongoing events in Europe, keeping Canada's economy on the right track must remain our priority. While Canada's economy has created nearly 600,000 net new jobs since July 2009, the strongest job growth in the G7, too many Canadians are still looking for work.

That is why we are working hard to implement our prudent, low tax plan to support Canada's economic recovery and help create jobs through the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Indeed, our Conservative government remains focused on ensuring Canada continues to offer the right environment to attract investment necessary to create more and better paying jobs, thereby improving the living standards of Canadians.

Ironically, one of the most proven ways to that end is an action opposed by the NDP, to give job creators the means to hire more workers by lowering their taxes, which is exactly what our government is doing. It is also exactly what we have done since coming to office and what we told Canadians during the election that we would continue to do if we were returned to government.

Given the results of May 2, it is safe to say that Canadian families prefer our low tax plan over the tax and spend plan of the NDP. Families know that our Conservative government is acting on what matters to them as we steer them through this turbulent global economic period.

Indeed, unlike what the NDP would have Canadians believe, our Conservative government has a strong and proven record on the economy, one that Canadians can look to and trust.

In the words of Bank of Montreal deputy chief economist, Doug Porter, appearing before the finance committee this week:

—compared to policy making in the rest of the world, Canada's economic policy-making has been exemplary. I don't think there's been a significant misstep in recent years.

That is very high praise.

Let us listen to the IMF:

Canada is actually matching up quite well on a relative basis...the recession was not too deep, they haven't had a financial crisis to the extent that the U.S. has had or the Europeans are having it. And so all in all Canada is actually doing quite well.

However, it is vitally important Canada maintains our hard-earned fiscal advantage that underpins the confidence that investors around the globe have in Canada and which encourages job growth.

Business of Supply

That is why our stimulus spending was temporary and targeted, without jeopardizing Canada's long-term fiscal advantage.

In budget 2010 and 2011, we started the process of returning to balanced budgets by doing such things as closing tax loopholes and launching a comprehensive review of government spending to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Our Conservative government has been very clear and consistent that we will not raise taxes or cut transfers to other levels of government in support of health care and social services, like the shameful record of the Liberals in the 1990s.

As the member for Kings—Hants, the current Liberal finance critic nonetheless, publicly declared, the Liberal government balanced its books by slashing transfers, provinces have been put in serious fiscal peril because of this irresponsible slashing.

Unlike the tax and spend NDP, our Conservative government is focused on creating the right conditions for jobs and long-term economic growth. Budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, will invest in the key drivers of economic growth: innovation, investment, education and training. It will seek to foster an environment in which all Canadians contribute to and benefit from a stronger economy.

Unfortunately the NDP voted against the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and its important investments.

Let us take some examples. Investment in innovation, education and training. Let me expand on that because it is important that the NDP understands just exactly what it voted against. The NDP has a motion here today but it does not know what it actually voted against.

In looking to the future, it is important to help develop and attract talented people to strengthen our capacity for world-leading research and development, and to improve the commercialization of research.

• (1515)

Since forming government in 2006, each successive budget we have tabled has demonstrated our Conservative government's commitment to implementing our science and technology strategy, and our ongoing determination to invest significant amounts in research and development, while encouraging the partnerships with the private sector that can turn promising concepts into ground-breaking applications.

In my own riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, for example, the Thompson Rivers University received almost \$900,000 from our government last month to purchase a low-temperature incubating facility. It is a very long and complicated piece of equipment, but it is really focused on meat research and development. It will help many local small and medium-sized enterprises that are closely linked to the agriculture, bioproduct and natural resource sectors in the B.C. interior and beyond.

Programs such as the Vanier Canada graduate scholarships, the Canada excellence research chairs, and the recently announced Banting post-doctoral fellowships program cover the full spectrum in attracting, retaining and developing world-class talented researchers

in Canada. We had the brain drain not so many years ago, and that is reversing.

The research these programs support, and the researchers they develop, will help sustain Canada's economic advantage well into the future.

However, we understand more needs to be done to ensure Canada is the leader in research and innovation to succeed in the global knowledge economy.

That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will build on earlier investments by providing significant new resources to advance a digital economy strategy, strengthen Canada's global research leadership, and support the commercialization of research by fostering business innovation.

Some examples are: \$80 million to support collaborative projects between colleges and small and medium-sized businesses that accelerate the adoption of information and communications technologies; \$53.5 million to expand the Canada excellence research chairs program; and \$60 million to promote increased student enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy.

The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences praised these investments, declaring they will “substantially boost Canada's capacity for research and innovation”. Amazingly again, the NDP voted against every one of those investments in research and development.

This takes us to another area, support for industries and communities. In planning for the future, we should not overlook the traditional industries working hard to adapt to an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan gives significant support to the long-term competitiveness of vital sectors in regions and communities across Canada.

For example, in recent years, the forestry sector has taken important steps to embrace innovative technologies and transition to higher value activities.

Government investments are helping the forestry sector to accelerate its transformation and to enhance its long-term future, a goal that is particularly important for many of my constituents.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes additional action to support the transformation of the forestry sector by providing \$60 million to help forestry companies innovate and tap into new opportunities abroad. This funding will support the development of emerging and breakthrough technologies for the forestry sector through the transformation technology program.

It will also help forestry companies to diversify and to expand their markets through the value to wood program, the Canada wood export program, and the North American wood first initiative. Little wonder the Forest Products Association of Canada said of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan:

This Budget continues the process of developing a policy framework aimed at fostering innovation and the type of strategic investments needed for the Canadian forest products industry to lead the world. This will bolster rural communities and protect jobs, strengthen the economy and advance Canada's environmental reputation.

Stunningly, again, the NDP voted against helping the forestry sector.

With regard to agriculture, our government is taking important steps to support a strong and competitive agricultural sector. It is important that it remains on the cutting edge of innovative science and technology.

● (1520)

Effective management of plant and animal diseases serves to reduce the likelihood of future outbreaks, which can have a significant economic impact on production and the livelihood of producers. We just have to look at BSE and what happened there.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan proposes measures that will support innovation and the long-term profitability of this key sector. Here are some of the things we are going to do.

We will provide \$50 million for an agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and increase commercialization of agricultural innovation;

We will extend the initiative for the control of diseases in the hog industry and provide \$24 million to complete initiatives directed at national biosecurity standards;

We will provide \$17 million for a management and monitoring strategy to contain and prevent the spread of the plum pox virus, and much more.

It should not come as a great surprise that organizations like the Canadian Cattlemen's Association were supportive of budget 2011. It stated that it:

—appreciate[d] the Government of Canada's focus on research and innovation in the agricultural sector—

It went on to say that these are areas that are:

—crucial to the long-term competitiveness of the Canadian cattle industry.

Again, the NDP, disappointingly, voted against helping Canada's agricultural sector.

I would like to speak now about the Canada-India research centre of excellence. For these and all sectors, the trend toward globalization and foreign investment provides many benefits to Canada and it is important to adopt policies that encourage trade and investment.

Emerging economies such as India, for example, are increasing their capacity to undertake advanced research that can make important economic and social contributions around the world. Canada is going to benefit from stronger links with researchers and institutions in India by partnering to produce new ideas that create

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economic opportunities, while developing and attracting highly skilled personnel.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan proposes \$12 million to help establish a new Canada-India research centre of excellence. This centre is going to lever the considerable relationships that already exist between post-secondary institutions, researchers and students in Canada and India for the benefit of both countries. As the University of Alberta president, Indira Samarasekera, asserted, this investment supported “the goal of reaching the world, of promoting Canada's international brand”.

Unbelievable as it might seem, although no surprise, the NDP again voted against it.

As I have already demonstrated, our government responded quickly to the global economic downturn with our economic action plan by taking decisive steps to protect incomes, create jobs, ease credit markets, and help workers and communities get back on their feet. Part of this plan was an investment to improve infrastructure in the communities across the country.

Now, with the next phase of the economic action plan, we are proposing targeted investments in infrastructure.

The plan includes: working with the provinces, territories, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other stakeholders on the development of a long-term plan for public infrastructure, and that is beyond the building Canada plan; legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable long-term infrastructure. Again, that was in the last budget. My municipalities are absolutely delighted with that secure investment into infrastructure. Providing up to \$150 million to support the construction of an all-season road between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk that completes the Dempster Highway, connecting Canadians from coast to coast; And providing \$228 million to fund repairs and major maintenance on federal bridges in the greater Montreal area to ensure that the bridges continue to serve the needs of the commuters while meeting the highest safety standards.

A more local example was \$4 million to build the new transit centre in Kamloops and over \$900,000 to the Kamloops airport to improve safety features. Again, that is very important in my riding.

The list just goes on. As the Federation of Canadian Municipalities stated that budget 2011 “makes it clear: strong communities—with quality infrastructure—are essential to a strong economic future”.

Yet again, the NDP voted against it.

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• (1525)

Just as planning by our Conservative government before the recession meant a softer landing than many other countries have faced, so too will the low-tax economic policies we are now taking enable us to have a strong economy well into the future.

In every region of Canada, families and businesses are paying less tax and unemployed workers are receiving better support and new training. Major job-creating infrastructure projects are improving the quality of life in communities while creating new jobs. Colleges and universities are benefiting from new investments.

Canadians can rest assured that our Conservative government believes that encouraging investment and economic growth is the best way to create jobs and a brighter future for Canadians. It is what Canadians expect of us and it is what we must deliver.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was a well-prepared speech. I sit with the member on the finance committee and I look forward to the information she brings forward.

In Canada right now the unemployment rate is at 7.5%. A lot of Canadians are sidelined and unable to contribute to the economy. In committee we heard that about \$5 billion is being kept back by corporations because they fear the banks are tightening up, and we are having difficulties. The committee heard from Glen Hodgson from the Conference Board of Canada, who said that this was not the time for the government to step back from our economy but the time to invest in it, because the private sector is refusing to and Canadians cannot.

I would like to hear her comments on the concept of the government stepping forward and taking a lead in this very nervous time.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure working with my hon. colleague in terms of both the pre-budget consultations and the finance committee.

What we perhaps need to recognize is that all the programs and opportunities that I have just talked about are in the budget. These are in phase two of the economic action plan. It is hardly an austerity program when we maintain increased health care spending to the provinces. It is hardly an austerity program when we maintain our transfers for social services and education.

Like everyone, we want the employment numbers to improve. The best way for employment numbers to improve is for businesses to have confidence and be competitive in a worldwide environment where they are going to want to spend their hard-earned money. The finance committee this morning heard about the importance of having a really competitive tax environment for businesses to invest in.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I reflect on the government's policy, in terms of priorities it was not that long ago when it said its first priority was to give huge tax breaks to corporations.

I listened to the member speak. We were talking about jobs and the need to create and generate jobs here in Canada. The government seems to be downplaying infrastructure jobs.

My question to the member is this: does she not recognize that, depending on what government does with its potential to generate revenue and how it spends its money, in certain areas more jobs can be created through creating infrastructure than by handing down a tax break or something of that nature? In fact, a good way to increase the number of jobs is through infrastructure and construction jobs. Sometimes investing in infrastructure programs will deliver more jobs than a corporate tax break. Would she not agree with that?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, again I have to reflect back on what has happened over the last couple of years, when extraordinary support was given for infrastructure across Canada. In my riding, there were roads, sewers and water. There were unprecedented expenditures in that area.

I also look at what is happening going forward with the building Canada fund. That fund still exists and is something that municipalities look forward to. Let us not forget about the gas tax. For the first time, municipalities are going to have a source of revenue for their infrastructure that they can count on.

We absolutely believe that infrastructure is important; we also believe it is critical to have a competitive tax environment to create jobs in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question related to the one just asked by the Liberal member.

[English]

Bertrand Russell said that not only does the heart affect language, but language affects the heart.

Time and again we hear our colleagues across the floor talking about these tax breaks as if people are giving money to corporations.

I would ask my colleague to remind us that these companies, which create jobs, are still paying taxes, and the more revenues they make, the more taxes they pay so that government services can be provided.

I know it is a very simple thing, but I think that thought gets lost in their rhetoric. Perhaps the member could elaborate on that.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. It not only is about the industries putting back, but people also often do not follow what happens with the profits from our corporations. Those profits from our corporations are part of what funds our Canada pension plan and part of what funds the investments of our grandmothers' RRSPs. They count on companies that are successful in Canada.

If companies are profitable and can make more money, they pay more taxes. Ultimately, what we have to ask is what happens to those profits, and they help everyday Canadians in many ways.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in her statement the member suggested that the Conservative government is investing heavily in research and development, and we applaud that investment. I do not remember voting against it, though I know the government bundled it all together into a big thing. When it bundles things together and says we voted against specifics, it is difficult.

My concern, though, is that the member referred to the forest industry being given \$60 million to innovate and tap into new opportunities abroad. We know there is a lot of research and development done in Canada, and there are examples in Canada of research and development being done in the country and the manufacturing being done outside the country. The best and the most heinous example of that is Nortel, and we know where that went.

What do you say to that kind of approach? Is it right to be spending the money on R and D here and then shipping the jobs elsewhere?

• (1535)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would like to remind all hon. members that comments and questions are directed to the Chair and not to their colleagues. I know this is an unusual structure for some.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two important things to look at here. One is that the Forest Products Association of Canada put the highest priority on that particular fund in terms of encouraging innovation.

When I talk about abroad, I am talking about the development of markets. One of the companies in my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, for the first time ever, was looking to ship its products over to China. We are talking about expanding markets, which is absolutely critical for our forestry industry and its ability to innovate at home.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her presentation. I would like to reassure her and say that the fact that we do not vote with her every time does not mean that we do not understand the government's proposals; it means that we believe that we can do better by doing other things. In this regard, I read a study about inequality released this summer by the IMF. It indicated that the more equitable the distribution of income, the longer and the more stable the periods of economic growth.

In light of this study, I would like to know how the member justifies the government's policy, which consists of giving gifts to big business, gifts that end up in investors' pockets and not in our country's economy.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member for asking what I think is a very important question.

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The best thing we can do for Canadians to change the distribution of wealth is to create jobs. That is what phase two of our economic action plan would do. We know that providing people with opportunities to have the jobs they want and need is the best thing we can do for Canadians and for the economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to mention that I will share my time with my colleague from York South—Weston. You will no doubt be happy to know that I will not be reading from a newspaper today, so I should not have any problems with this speech.

I know that this debate has to do with the economy and job creation. I am going to assume that our colleagues on the government side are interested in creating jobs. We are as well. However, what we hear a lot from the government is rhetoric, slogans or mantras claiming that there is a direct correlation between tax cuts—particularly corporate tax cuts—and job creation.

Let us be clear. There are a number of ways to create jobs. There are a number of ways for the government to stimulate the economy and create jobs. Tax cuts may be one way, but there are also other ways, such as investing in infrastructure, redistributing wealth or making direct investments to benefit low-income households or the unemployed. All of these measures will have very different effects on economic recovery and economic stimulus. These are effects that can be assessed, and this has been done by the Department of Finance, so by a government department.

A few of these measures were evaluated based on their multiplying effect on the economy. For example, the Department of Finance determined that for each dollar of corporate tax cuts, approximately 30 extra cents would be added to the GDP. That is the least effective measure of the six evaluated by Revenue Canada. One of the most effective measures involves direct help for the poorest households or the unemployed; for each dollar invested this way, \$1.70 is added to the GDP. In terms of infrastructure investments, \$1.60 is added to the GDP for each dollar invested.

And for measures related to housing investments, \$1.50 in economic growth is generated for each dollar invested. These measures have very different effects. Some are more successful and promising than others. Corporate tax cuts are the least promising and successful.

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This is easy to understand. Direct measures to help low-income families and the unemployed generate so much economic growth because the money is immediately invested in the economy. Households need this money to invest directly because they have no money to save. It is invested directly into the economy. Investing in infrastructure or housing is just as easy to understand. It creates direct jobs and allows private businesses to benefit from infrastructure to make the economy work.

These three measures have direct, positive impacts on the economy. When it comes to reducing income tax, the impact is extremely weak. Can corporate tax cuts help the economy? In certain cases, yes. Take, for example, a private business that does not have the cash needed to make investments. It wants to invest in the economy but does not have the money to do so. At that point, income tax and corporate tax cuts will generate the money it needs to be able to invest.

However, that is not the current reality. The liquid assets the private sector currently has available, in dividends, investments or funds set aside, have increased, going from \$157 billion in 2001 to \$477 billion today. Let me be clear: Canadian companies are currently sitting on a mountain of \$477 billion. That is money they could be investing. It is an increase of \$320 billion in 10 years. Of that \$320 billion, I would like to specify that roughly \$120 billion comes, once again, from the Canadian public purse through the corporate tax cuts enacted by the previous Liberal and Conservative governments.

What are the corporations doing with this \$477 billion? They are not investing it right now. Why not? There are a number of reasons that we will not necessarily get into at this time, but the economic context is such that they have decided not to invest.

● (1540)

What impact will corporate tax cuts have on the Canadian private sector? They will not lead to more investment. If the profitable corporations are currently not investing, if they find the current context not suitable for investing the \$477 billion they have today, not to mention the additional revenue they will earn, then they will see no additional reasons to invest.

That is why corporate tax cuts are not the best approach in the current Canadian economic context. However, it is the only significant way the government has found, with what it calls the low tax agenda, to stimulate the Canadian economy. The Department of Finance has clearly stated that corporate tax cuts have no impact on job creation. The proof is in budget 2009, budget 2010, but not in budget 2011. We can presume that the government was too embarrassed to add those cuts in budget 2011. Budgets 2009 and 2010 clearly show that corporate tax cuts have no impact on job creation. I repeat: they have no impact on job creation. And the government has no proof that a single job has been created as a result of its corporate tax cut initiative.

What impact will this have on the Canadian treasury? We are talking about a loss of \$4 billion to \$6 billion this year. That is a loss of approximately \$10 billion to the Canadian treasury over two years. That \$10 billion was not invested; rather, it has helped to build the mountain of cash on which private companies are now sitting. In the past 10 years, we are talking about a net loss of \$120 billion to

the Canadian treasury. This money could have been invested in infrastructure rather than transferred to companies where it is not doing any good.

We are currently talking about an infrastructure deficit of approximately \$100 billion. The hon. members for Quebec know that there are striking examples in Montreal. We need to invest to replace the Champlain Bridge. This summer, we saw the news about the Ville-Marie tunnel; this is symptomatic of the state of our infrastructure. This type of problem exists in the larger centres and in my riding of Rimouski—Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, where I spent the summer meeting with municipal councils. I have 39 municipalities in my riding and most of them need infrastructure, whether it be recreation centres, new municipal offices, road infrastructure or water systems. There are pressing needs. We are talking about \$100 billion for Canada.

According to Revenue Canada's figures, the money that is currently being given to companies so that they can add it to their mountain of cash—the money that is not being used for anything—could be invested in a more beneficial manner.

Let us be clear. If companies want to invest, they can do so. They are currently in a position to invest but they choose not to do so. They are not going to choose to invest more and create jobs if they are given tax breaks such as the ones the federal government gave them in previous plans.

According to the Department of Finance's figures, the NDP's program is much more effective in terms of stimulating the economy and creating jobs. We are talking about investing in infrastructure and providing direct support to low-income households and unemployed workers. These are measures that will help to increase employment. The direction that the Conservatives are taking and their failure to act are putting us in an increasingly perilous situation, as demonstrated by the warnings from financial firms, banks and the International Monetary Fund, among other things.

By adopting the NDP's plan, we would be going in the right direction; we would be creating employment and stimulating the economy. I would like to invite the government to go in this direction, specifically by voting in favour of the motion put forward by my colleague, the finance critic.

● (1545)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a very clear question, and I hope our colleague can give us a clear answer.

The NDP and our government clearly disagree when it comes to taxation. The NDP wants to raise taxes on Canadians, and we believe in lower taxes. This was demonstrated when our Conservative government reduced the GST twice, from 7% to 6%, and then again to 5%, thereby easing the tax burden on Canadian households.

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The NDP voted against lowering the GST both times. It is even proud of its position. This is what the current NDP finance critic had to say:

[English]

“Cuts to the GST take us in the wrong direction. I am very proud that our caucus stood opposed to that”.

[Translation]

Is the NDP still proud of its vote against cuts to the GST? Does the NDP still believe that lowering the GST was a bad idea?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer this question because what she said is true. It is not just the NDP that has said so. Most serious Canadian economists have shown that if stimulus and economic recovery were the goal, lowering the GST was probably one of the least effective ways of achieving it.

The Conservatives should have lowered income taxes, but we did not have that debate. Cutting taxes would have been a much more effective recovery measure. Decreasing the GST from 7% to 5% reduced federal tax revenues. This contributed in great part to the fact that, between 2006 and 2011, we slipped into the red: the federal government went from a \$13 billion surplus to a deficit even before the recession.

Cutting the GST was probably the worst measure that this government could have adopted. It was a purely political move that did nothing to stimulate the economy or promote recovery.

• (1550)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. I have a question to ask him about the government.

As we know, the budget was tabled eight months ago, in February. The Conservatives seem to think that nothing has changed. In fact, last February, the world was in fairly good economic shape. Now, the opposite is true. The global economy has been dealt a serious blow.

How can the Conservatives believe that a policy that was appropriate 10 months ago, is still appropriate today, when the circumstances have changed dramatically?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

I feel as though we are in *Groundhog Day* today. This situation reminds us of what we went through before 2008, when the federal government was hiding and denying that we were about to enter an economic recession. Today, the same government is still blind to the fact that we are about to enter a recession. It is not the NDP saying this. The majority of financial and economic institutions are saying that we are in danger of soon heading into a recession and that immediate, concrete measures to stimulate the economy are necessary.

The Minister of Finance seems to have his head in the sand and, as he did during the previous recession, he is denying that there are problems that require solutions other than slogans or mantras. Some facts are even substantiated by his own department, so it appears that he does not read the documents.

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion presented this morning by my colleague from Parkdale—High Park. I would like to thank her for her excellent work. I represent a riding which is a perfect example of the need for immediate action on the economy. The Conservatives say that they have a jobs plan and that it is working. That is just not true, and is nowhere more evident than in my riding.

The riding was once the proud home to much of the Canadian manufacturing industry. As we have heard this week, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the recent years. York South—Weston had: Canadian Cycle and Motor Company; Moffat stoves; McClary appliances; Massey-Harris; de Havilland; Fruehauf; Scott-Woods; Canadian Gypsum; MacMillan Bloedel Limited; A.P. Green; Dominion Bridge Company; Ferranti-Packard; Kodak Canada; Levis; Crosley Radio and Television; Schnier; Carl Austin; Acme Screw and Gear; Pepsi-Cola; and lots more. They are all gone.

Tens of thousands of good manufacturing jobs are now lost. Some companies went out of business, some went elsewhere in Canada and some began manufacturing in the U.S. or overseas to take advantage of cheaper labour. No one in the government did anything to try and stop them. Therefore, with all these jobs lost, what remains are service sector jobs at minimum wage or unemployment.

My riding has 25% higher unemployment than anywhere else in Toronto and Toronto's unemployment is already higher than the national average, currently at 8.9%. Cuts to Service Canada offices in such a needy area will make the difficult task of accessing employment insurance and other services provided by these offices even more so.

In addition, my riding is home to a population which is nearly 60% immigrant and over 10% of the people in my riding are not yet Canadian citizens. Immigrants have a much more difficult time finding work, as language and other barriers are more difficult to climb for them. Recent cuts to immigrant services by the Conservatives has had a devastating impact on settlement service agencies and other community agencies that assist these immigrant populations. Further cuts by the government would make an already intolerable situation much worse.

The government frequently points to its record in infrastructure spending as having successfully reversed the recent recession. It is not so in York South—Weston.

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First, there was virtually no infrastructure spending in my riding. Most of the projects were for the city of Toronto to replace some water mains. The total spending was well under \$5 million and well under the \$50 million spent in Parry Sound—Muskoka. We received perhaps 100 temporary jobs, no permanent infrastructure jobs. That did not make much of a dent in the 7,000 or so people who are currently unemployed in the riding.

The spending spree is over but the problem persists. The unemployed in my riding sometimes are lucky enough to find jobs outside the riding. However, without investment and transit infrastructure, these folks spend as much as four hours each day commuting to work. Plans for a new light rapid transit system were recently shelved and the federal government did not offer any contribution toward its construction.

Here is a great example of where the government could be creating local employment and helping the economy of Canada generally. I have long advocated the use of electric trains for regional rail services in Toronto. The government could both contribute to greenhouse gas reduction and economic development by providing infrastructure funding for electrification of rail services. The current plans for diesel trains, some of the money coming from the federal government, has neighbourhoods angry. Provincial leader Andrea Horwath of the NDP has made electrification of rail services a part of her strategy for carrying Ontario forward. She said:

New Democrats won't put people's health at risk by sending dirty diesel trains through people's backyards. We'll take a new, cleaner, greener approach and use electric trains from the get-go.

We would like to see that part of the strategy for moving Canada forward. Therefore, we continue to have productivity sapping road congestion with no alternative and no vision for one.

The national public transit strategy put forward by my colleague from Trinity—Spadina is a way to encourage the Conservative government to take a more active role in helping build the infrastructure we need and create jobs. Cutting back on public transit funding, if that is part of the upcoming austerity plan, is taking Canada backward.

● (1555)

A huge proportion of the unemployed in the riding are young people. For them, the unemployment rate is significantly higher still. None of the measures put in place by the government has helped them secure family-supporting jobs.

These kids are part of a group that service agencies call "the Mike Harris generation". They are the kids whose mothers and fathers were punished by the Conservative government in Ontario in 1995 with huge cuts to their support systems. These kids have learned that governments are the enemy, that governments punish them not help them. In desperation, some of these kids turn to criminal activities. The government's answer is to build jails. That way at least part of the social housing crisis would be taken care of.

What is wrong with Conservative economic policies is that they are not forward looking. Steady as she goes, doing the same thing we did last year allows other countries the opportunity to leapfrog over Canada in the race to be on the leading edge of economic growth.

For example, we all know that carbon-based fuels are a finite resource. We are all concerned about air pollution and climate change caused by burning fossil fuels in ever-increasing quantities. We all know that creating and harvesting alternative sources of energy as well as becoming more energy efficient will be important activities for any country to move forward. However, the Conservatives will soon end the energy efficiency credits for homeowners yet they have done nothing to spur investment in green energy technology.

There are huge demands for windmills and solar panels but most are built in other countries. We are not investing in Canadian-made electric trains for regional and long distance service. We should be leading the way. That requires decisive action by the government.

Many of my constituents are seniors living on fixed incomes. Their costs keep rising. They would love to make their homes more energy efficient. The jobs that might be created to do this work would be sorely welcomed in the riding. However, the uncertainty of the assistance available from the government makes this another temporary solution.

I recently met with the president of Greensaver, a Toronto-based energy retrofit company that pioneered the idea of an energy audit to show where savings would be best in a home. It assembled a team of trained workers to install solar water heating systems but had to lay them off when the government assistance dried up. Companies need predictable long-term programs not makeshift temporary plans.

The Conservative government has made quite a few comments about how raising taxes on big businesses would kill jobs. That is not true. We are not asking for a raise in taxes, just to reverse the tax breaks. Tax breaks given to large corporations by the Conservatives have gone directly to increase the profits of those already profitable corporations. They are not creating jobs. In turn, these excess profits are used to line the pockets of the directors and shareholders of these corporations. These tax breaks are not linked to job creation but to increasing profits. If members do not believe me, here is a quote which backs up my assertion:

The Leader of the Opposition has called for an increase in taxes on these very same enterprises from 15% to 19.5%. That means that the after tax profits, which come from these companies and go directly into the pension fund of the workers the member purports to defend, would be reduced.

It does not state that jobs would be lost. Rather, it states that profits would be reduced.

Who said that? It was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

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As my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry has stated, the NDP does not wish to raise taxes. We merely wish to reverse the Conservative tax giveaways to already profitable corporations. The government has admitted that its tax giveaways went directly to profit levels not to creating jobs.

• (1600)

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yet again my colleague has shown the NDP acerbic skepticism toward profits as though profits were evil. He somehow uses a deft hand to say there is a difference between raising taxes and cancelling taxes that have been previously reduced.

[Translation]

I have a question for the member. Yesterday, the European Commission made a proposal to the 27 member states of the European Union concerning a new measure to tax financial transactions, which would mean that many common financial and banking transactions would be taxed. That is an idea that the NDP has traditionally supported. In fact, the NDP's industry critic and co-chair of the NDP caucus, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, once introduced a bill to tax financial transactions in Canada.

What does my friend, the member who just spoke, think about that?

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the banking industry in Canada is already on very secure footing as the result of years of maintaining regulations.

I know the Conservative government members opposite do not like regulations and would like less government. However, we have a solid banking industry in this country. Part of the reason for that is all parties have resisted attempts by the banking industry to deregulate itself. When the banks wanted to merge we said no.

With regard to the NDP hating profits, that is not the case. We understand that corporations need to be profitable in order to survive. They need to be able to show a return to their investors.

We are concerned that already profitable corporations are being given a handout by the government's reducing the amount of taxes they pay. What happens when the government reduces the taxes that are paid by already profitable corporations? It does not create jobs, as the minister has agreed. It increases their profits and decreases the amount of money available in the Canadian revenue stream, which then increases the pressure on the government to either reduce services to Canadian citizens or to raise personal taxes in order to compensate by an equivalent amount, billions of dollars.

We are opposed to that.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the manufacturing industry. It is an industry that has been hit in terms of phenomenal numbers, tens of thousands, not only in Ontario but in provinces across the country.

On the policy front, the Conservatives have dropped the ball on the buy America provisions. We encourage the Conservatives to take

a stronger stand because this has an impact on our manufacturing industry more than on any other industry across Canada.

Would the member agree that a buy America policy hurts manufacturing jobs? The types of jobs the member referred to involve export to other countries, especially the United States. Therefore, when there is a buy America provision, it prevents consumers from purchasing those items that are important, that generate and create the types of jobs that he is talking about protecting.

Would the member agree that the Conservatives have dropped the ball on that issue?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I agree that the buy America policy will in fact hurt Canadian jobs.

We have some buy Canada policies, particularly in the provinces. The Liberal government in Ontario has waived that policy for the purchase of diesel trains for the air-rail link in order to buy the trains from Japan.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke earlier about the importance of infrastructure investment. He and I share neighbouring ridings.

Could the member explain how important it is to have infrastructure investment in shovel-ready projects, for example, on clean electric trains in our neighbourhoods so that we do not have diesel trains running throughout our communities?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the federal government launched a project some years ago to create a corridor through both of our ridings that would carry 464 diesel trains a day.

Both the communities and the community activists have opposed the notion that diesel trains should be the way that these commuters would travel through our riding.

We need action on the part of the federal government to support the creation of an industry that would build these electric trains and insist that this train corridor be serviced by only electric trains.

[Translation]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Markham—Unionville.

Throughout the country, growth is slowing down, jobs are being lost and there is record unemployment among youth. A government's main task is to ensure prosperity, not only for our country, but also for every Canadian. No one should be forgotten.

The Prime Minister believes his plan to rebuild our economy is very easy. It involves cutting corporate taxes and reducing the government's role. This means cuts and job losses, but the government should be focusing on preserving and creating jobs.

As the party that put the Canadian economy back on track on the heels of poor Conservative fiscal management, we know what it takes to deal with a debt crisis and a deficit. It takes fiscal discipline along with growth and healthy revenues. In other words, people need to be working.

Business of Supply

How do the Conservatives respond to all of this? They cut corporate taxes and the government's role. If you are worried about losing your job, the government thinks it is your problem. If you have already lost your job and cannot find another one, the government thinks it is your fault.

Unlike this government, the Liberals are focusing on policies that ensure prosperity, growth and jobs. We are here to say, as has been said in other eras when unemployment was high and times were tough, that it is the government's responsibility to work with companies, large or small, to increase business opportunities, give hope, and provide more opportunities for change and development.

Canada's economic prosperity has always depended on strong international trade. Under the Conservative government, Canada is now seriously lagging behind on the international scene. A significant rise in job creation will not come without a serious effort focused on international trade.

Canada's trade deficit with the rest of the world was \$753 million in July 2011. That was our fifth consecutive month with a trade deficit. Since January 2009, Canada has only had nine months of trade surpluses, but 22 months of trade deficits.

The Conservatives' failure to act has led to a contraction of the Canadian economy at a time when we simply cannot afford it. Our real gross domestic product fell by 0.1% in the second quarter. This latest decline in the GDP is a good indication of the ineffectiveness of the Conservative plan, which focuses too much on corporate handouts that are not reinvested, instead of focusing on Canadians and their needs, such as job creation, education, professional training and health care.

Young people are especially affected by the government's failures and its inaction when it comes to the things that matter the most. Statistics on the high youth unemployment rate this summer prove that this government did nothing to create the jobs students needed precisely when they were trying to save money for the upcoming school year.

This summer, for instance, the average unemployment rate for students aged 15 to 24 was 17.2%, up from 16.9% in the summer of 2010. As a point of comparison, the unemployment rate in the summers from 2006 to 2008 was below 14%.

Another sector that suffered this summer was tourism, which this Conservative government consistently neglected. Worse still, this government even made decisions that were extremely detrimental to the tourism industry. We are already going through very tough economic times, and the Canadian industry cannot survive if this government brings in policies that undermine entrepreneurs.

• (1610)

From eliminating the GST visitor's rebate, to hiking the air travellers' security tax by 55% for foreign flights, to refusing to send a Canadian pavilion to Expo 2012, this government has done nothing but hurt Canada's tourism industry. Foreign tourism is a very lucrative source of revenue on which the various levels of government in Canada and hundreds of Canadian communities rely, and those communities deserve federal leadership to help bring tourists to our shores.

But the Conservatives' attack on employment extends far beyond tourism and young people. Small businesses have also been completely ignored by the Conservative government. Small and medium-sized business owners and municipal leaders are absolutely shocked that Canada will not have a presence in South Korea for Expo 2012, when South Korea is such an important trade partner for Canada. Our 2010 Expo pavilion in Shanghai saw over 6.4 million visitors and facilitated 46 high-level business meetings that generated many agreements and partnerships.

The Conservatives prefer to ignore all that because making cuts is more important to them than maintaining and creating jobs. The lack of skilled workers, the need for more investment in infrastructure and the increasing burden of red tape are a constant source of frustration for small business owners. The only thing holding a number of them back from expanding is that they cannot find the skilled labour they need. What is more, after three years of promising to cut red tape, all this government has done is conduct another study. We need measures right now because Canadians need jobs right now.

Since this government is more concerned with its ideological beliefs than the needs of Canadians, it is not surprising that the Conservatives have completely shirked their responsibilities in a number of recent developments with our trade partners, which could have an adverse effect on Canadian businesses and workers.

The government was asleep at the switch when President Obama announced the provisions of his "Buy American" policy in his economic recovery plan earlier this month. It was taken by surprise even though, in two speeches before the bill was tabled, the President clearly indicated where his administration was headed. The so-called exemption for Canada in 2009 was clearly ignored in the \$400 billion plan proposed by President Obama. The consequences for Canada will be serious and the Conservatives' incompetence in this matter is unacceptable.

With the "Buy American" policy promoting the purchase of American products, country-of-origin labelling for agri-food products, and the Canada-U.S. tax treaty, Canadian interests have been systematically ignored by the Americans and the Conservative government has not done its job.

It is high time to focus on what is important: jobs. No miracle will save Canada from the troubling economic situation in which it finds itself. The government must invest in people, in our infrastructure, and in our capacity for research and development. The government must invest in helping needy Canadians rather than wasting taxpayers' money on punitive laws that will not make our streets safer and on fighter jets that Canadians do not need.

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● (1615)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his speech.

The labour market is currently weaker than it was before the October 2008 crisis. The number of full- and part-time workers who are looking for full-time work has increased very rapidly. Quality, full-time jobs that allow families to make a living are very hard to find in many regions of the country.

Can the hon. member tell us how things are going in his riding?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my speech, I gave some figures that showed that the unemployment rate across Canada has increased. In my riding, things are no different. A good full-time salary is not the same thing as a part-time one. If the full-time salary is not good, the part-time one is not going to be either. This is affecting people across the country.

In my riding in eastern Montreal, we definitely have problems. People are working two or three jobs and are still not earning as much as they did at their regular job. We spoke today about jobs that were lost in the manufacturing industry—an important industry—and that have not been recovered.

[English]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for all that he has done in the House as a collaborative member. I make note of this because we had a very good relationship when the member was vice-chair of the finance committee. In fact, I miss our work together. It was enjoyable and very satisfying work.

I want to bring to his attention today that my parliamentary secretary assistant, Sarah Pendlebury, is moving on and taking on a new adventure at Frontier College. I wanted to let him know, because we are talking about the economy and finance, that a valued member of our team is leaving and I want to give him the opportunity to respond to that, knowing that he had such a good relationship with all of us.

● (1620)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I think that is the easiest question I have ever had and I cannot answer it. I thank the parliamentary secretary for her compliments. She is doing a great job and it as a result I think also of her assistants. It is unfortunate that one of her assistants is leaving. Hopefully, she will be replacing that assistant and not adding somebody else to the unemployment line. I am encouraging her to perhaps hire two or three and, hopefully, one of them will be a Quebecker.

I thank the member once again for her good words. I hope to be back on the finance committee sooner than later.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the hon. member for the speech he just gave. Since I myself am also a member for the Montreal region, I would like to know what solutions he proposes to stimulate job creation in his riding in eastern Montreal in particular, as well as across the island of Montreal.

What sectors would he promote? What solutions does he propose to stimulate job creation?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, in Montreal, there are no fences separating the ridings. Someone may live in one riding and work or go to school in another.

I said that we must invest in education and work with the Government of Quebec. In my riding, the La TOHU organization offers jobs only to people who live in Saint-Michel. From time to time, the people from the organization ask for assistance from Service Canada, not because they need help to provide jobs, but because they are providing services to get young people off the streets. That is one example.

For every dollar they receive from Service Canada, for every dollar invested by the Government of Canada, they can raise \$4, \$5 or even up to \$10. But this summer, the government cut its programs, not by 10% or 20%, but by 100%. It was very hard for them.

That is one of the ways in which the Government of Canada could work with young people who live in Montreal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cardigan, Canada Revenue Agency; the hon. member for Sudbury, The Economy; the hon. member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Search and Rescue.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

[English]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was not so long ago that I was talking about NDP economic policy. I used to use words like, “neanderthal”, “crazy” and “far left”, but I will confess that in the last little while, perhaps since the leadership of Jack Layton, its policies have become somewhat less neanderthal, somewhat less crazy, somewhat less far left and perhaps a little less crass.

[Translation]

I hope that my NDP colleagues will take those comments as a compliment, because that is how they were intended.

[English]

However, when I turn from the NDP to the Conservatives, I am afraid I will be a little harsher.

[Translation]

Perhaps before I do that, I should mention that the NDP motion makes a lot of sense and that the Liberals are happy to support it today.

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[English]

As for the Conservatives, this triumphalist talk about the economic action plan, as if it has created every one of these 600,000 jobs, which is what the Minister of Finance said today in question period, "...the economic action plan which resulted in 600,000 jobs".

Conservative parties usually have the motto "governments don't create jobs, the private sector creates jobs". Here the Conservatives have put it on its head and claim responsibility that they have created every job. Does that mean that the Conservatives think that Canada's natural resources, the oil and metals in the ground that have helped our recovery, were created by the Conservative Party of Canada?

●(1625)

[Translation]

Do they think that the Conservative Party was behind Mr. Chrétien's measures in the 1990s?

[English]

Do the Conservatives think that Mr. Chrétien balanced the books and reduced the debt because of them? Do they think that Mr. Chrétien refused to deregulate banks and refused to allow bank mergers because of them, when they in fact were urging deregulation, which led to huge problems in the U.S. and the U.K?

Mr. James Rajotte There are good mergers and bad mergers.

Hon. John McCallum: It is crazy to be witness to Conservative Party members saying that the private sector, history and natural resources have absolutely nothing to do with the recovery, but that every job is due to them.

I will get more to the point in today's situation. The budget was introduced in February of this year. We should think back to those long six month and how things have changed. It is now almost October, and even if the economic action plan in that budget of February 2011 was the right thing to do at that time, although I do not accept that, but even if it were, the whole world has changed in the last six months. Therefore, what was right in February 2011, is not right today in late September 2011. We should think back to February of this year. What was happening? The stock market was going up nicely. Now it has tanked by close to 20%.

Everybody thought the U.S. economy was proceeding fine in those days, but now we see what has happened to the U.S. Every indicator points to bad news. We have dysfunctional politics south of the border. We have the crazy situation about the debt limit and the incapacity in the United States to act politically. Therefore, what was one thing in February is totally different and far worse, both economically and politically, today.

Let us look at Europe. Nobody was talking about the eurozone ending. Nobody was talking about Greece defaulting. Nobody was talking about European banks defaulting. However, that is exactly what they are talking about now. It seems that the European leaders cannot get their act together, cannot agree on what to do, so we have a real possibility of a really dangerous situation, both in Europe and in the United States.

I will quote from an article in *The Economist* that came out just today. It is entitled "Be Afraid". It states:

But governments are not just failing to act; they are exacerbating the mess.

My point is that if the government does not adopt something like what the NDP motion calls for, it will be not just failing to act, but exacerbating the mess.

I will proceed further to talk about three people and institutions that agree with what I have just said, and they can hardly be regarded as raving socialists.

First, the IMF went into countries, forced them to cut spending and were really mean to the small countries, et cetera. It is fiscal conservative. What does the IMF say? The new head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, recently, in her opening speech to the annual meeting, said that what governments today should do is that they should have a medium term plan to balance the books and pay down debt, but, in the short run, they should take action to support jobs and the economy.

She is the head of the IMF. The government should do what she said. We certainly have the room. We should take action to support jobs and the economy in the short run, while having a plan to balance the books in the longer run.

We also have Sherry Cooper, the chief economist at Bank of Montreal. I used to be the chief economist at the Royal Bank and the golden rule for chief economists is to never ever criticize the federal government or the boss will get mad. Maybe her boss is mad at her but she spoke truth to power and said what was right. She said that the actions of the government were like the actions of Herbert Hoover during the Great Depression. We do not raise taxes or cut spending when times are super tough. That is what Herbert Hoover did and it caused the Great Depression. That is what the government seems to be poised on doing, unless it follows the advice that it is receiving today.

I will talk about *The Economist*. Everybody would agree that *The Economist* is a small "c" conservative magazine. It is not raving socialist. It is fiscally very conservative most of the time. It understands that times are different, times are tough, times are extremely dangerous, so it has been urging for a number of weeks now the same thing as the head of the IMF and the same thing as Sherry Cooper.

●(1630)

They are saying that, during these difficult and dangerous economic times, it is not the time for governments to cut. It is the time for governments to support the economy. They are complaining that the problem we have is not just that governments are failing to act but that they are exacerbating the mess.

I would conclude that these are unusual times and they are dangerous times from an economic point of view. I am not saying that the government's plan back in February was appropriate but it can make a case that it was. However, even if it were appropriate in February, it is not appropriate in September. Additional actions need to be taken unless the government wants to be part of the mess rather than part of the solution.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech and for his acknowledgement at the beginning.

The important thing to recognize from that is that we need to work together as parliamentarians. We have talked about that on this side of the House, that we would like to work with our colleagues on all sides to ensure we are working for families.

I would like to hear the member's comments relating to the Department of Finance noting that infrastructure investment has more than five times the economic impact of corporate income tax cuts. It published this fact in the appendix of its budget in 2009. I would like to hear the member's comments relating to that statistic.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, this may not be true in the longer term. What we are advocating is more infrastructure. I agree with the member that this provides significant bang for the buck.

At the time of the election campaign, we wanted the corporate tax rate to be frozen at 18% for some time. It then went back down to 16.5% and our position became to put it back to 18%. We think that would have been competitive. Other things that we had in our platform were of higher priority.

I acknowledge that the election is over. I acknowledge that the Conservatives have a majority and there is not much likelihood that they will take what both of our parties advocated, in different ways, although the NDP's was more extreme than ours. That they will raise the corporate tax rate, whether to 18% or to something higher, I think is extraordinarily unlikely. I am not really making that a big part of the debate.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, most of the adjectives that the member for Markham—Unionville used at the beginning of his speech to describe NDP economic policy should apply to the position he has taken today. He has misrepresented the views of the IMF. He has misrepresented a leader published in today's *The Economist*, which makes it very clear that the fear and the danger are still coming from the lack of a clear, credible plan put forward by the countries forming the eurozone.

Will the member not admit that the policies prescribed by the opposition motion, if implemented in Canada, are not those recommended by the IMF, they are not those recommended by this leader via *The Economist*, and they are not those that Canadians want us to be embracing? This is a debt crisis, as Prime Minister Cameron said in this House, and the only way to overcome it is to keep spending under control while stimulating growth and the creation of jobs, as our government has been doing very successfully for years now and even more successfully this year.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, while the hon. gentleman might know a thing or two about Afghanistan, he clearly knows nothing about economics, because what he just said is absolute nonsense. He sounds like the Tea Party person.

I read the speech by the head of the IMF very carefully. She clearly said exactly what I said. She said that in the short run we must focus on jobs and the economy and that in the medium run we must focus on balancing the books and paying down debt. She said that those who had room, and I do not think Greece has room but

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Canada does, should take short-run action to support jobs and the economy. What he said on that is nonsense.

I have just read two recent articles today from *The Economist* and they say precisely what I said. I said that the political leaders could not get their act together. I said that it was a political issue and that to solve the eurozone they needed political action, which is what *The Economist* said.

However, *The Economist* has also set out in at least two articles that what we need also, in areas where there is room, for certain countries including Canada, is that they should take short-run action. That is the truth and I do not agree with anything that he said.

• (1635)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I am very pleased to stand in the House today to speak to the very important motion put forward by the hard-working member for Parkdale—High Park.

Although my Conservative colleagues continue to boast about Canada's economic recovery, more and more I am hearing stories from members of my community of Sudbury that times remain tough and that high-quality, well-paying jobs just are not there in the numbers that they used to be.

Under the Conservative's stewardship of the economy, far too many of these family supporting jobs have been lost and Canadian households are increasingly feeling the squeeze of crippling household debt. Meanwhile, global economic instability and stagnation threatens already meagre economic growth in Canada.

I will focus on the issue of Canada's infrastructure deficit and how strategic investment by the federal government can have a real impact on stimulating both short-term and long-term economic growth.

Whether it is the Champlain Bridge linking Montreal with the South Shore or crumbling roads and sewage systems in my riding of Sudbury, it is clear that Canada is in desperate need of a major nationwide infrastructure-building project.

In Laval, Quebec, in 2006, we saw first-hand what can happen when we allow infrastructure to deteriorate beyond the point of repair. Five people were killed, including a young child, when a highway overpass collapsed. Just last month, we also witnessed issues related to falling debris on a Montreal highway, leading to its closure and ultimately resulting in additional traffic congestion and additional delays for commuters and businesses.

Is the government prepared to wait until we see a major bridge collapse, like the one in Minnesota in 2007, to take action?

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This seems to be an extremely opportune time for the government to invest in a national infrastructure project. Interest rates remain at an historic low, making public infrastructure investment less expensive than it would have been in the past. Why is the government not undertaking such an initiative now while money is cheap and Canadians desperately need jobs? After all, the Department of Finance itself has noted that infrastructure investment has more than five times the economic impact of corporate income tax cuts. In fact, it published this fact in the appendix of budget 2009.

Why, then, is the Conservative government pursuing an economic avenue that neglects infrastructure and focuses, instead, on giving corporate handouts to Bay Street executives in the form of corporate tax cuts? Why not strategically focus on infrastructure investment, something that would produce jobs in all regions of the country immediately?

I am also very curious as to how the Conservatives propose strategic review will affect employees in the public sector.

In my riding of Sudbury, the Canada Revenue Agency is a major presence and is truly one of the vital employers in our region. Staffing cuts at this CRA facility would have large-scale negative effects on the greater community and the economic spinoffs associated with the CRA facility are numerous in my community of Sudbury.

Sudbury's economy is still recovering from the year long strike at Vale. I fear that should layoffs occur at the CRA Sudbury site, they will have extremely negative consequences for small businesses that rely on these public sector employees to maintain their bottom line.

I have similarly grave concerns over staffing levels at the Sudbury Service Canada office, which is another important employer in the riding that provides vital services to the members of my community.

I, therefore, urge the Minister of Finance to immediately reconsider all actions that reduce the public sector contribution to the economy. The government should be taking a more flexible approach than it has been. Myself and many hard-working Canadians believe that the government should, therefore, reconsider its planned spending cuts, in light of global economic instability.

• (1640)

More and more often I am hearing from seniors who are unable to stretch their pension cheques to meet the inflationary increase in the cost of living. This is because the real value of the Canadian pension plan—the CPP, as most of us call it—is not keeping up with the cost of living, and many individuals who have invested in other pensions are seeing their value slip away as pension funds lose money in stock markets or try to change payout rules to shift the risk onto their shoulders.

People who have paid into the CPP and have saved up for their retirement for all of their working lives are now finding that the rules of the game were always secretly stacked against them. The only way to ensure that all Canadians are adequately supported in their retirement is a phased-in increase in the CPP.

Previously, the Conservatives indicated that they may be open to this option, but they have since turned their backs on this proposal. Despite the finance minister's refusal to seriously consider this

option, the proposal has a large amount of support, including support from a previous chief actuary of the CPP. Moreover, the CEO of the CPP Investment Board has said that the administrative costs of increasing the CPP would be lower than the private plan the Minister of Finance has proposed.

We must now act to ensure that Canadian seniors are able to live without financial hardship. We cannot simply close our eyes to the issue, because it will only get worse as the next generation of Canadians begins to retire, increasing the percentage of Canadians receiving CPP.

In conclusion, New Democrats are not talking about spending but investment: investment in targeted incentives for real job creators; investments in critical public infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, public transit and broadband Internet; and investing in the training of workers for the 21st century global economy.

New Democrats know that now is the time to make strategic investments to promote economic growth and attack the jobs deficit. Now is the time to put partisanship aside and work together on pragmatic, practical policy solutions that encourage job creation, economic productivity and the kind of investment that builds expertise in the Canadian workforce.

I challenge those on the other side of the House to work together with New Democrats to meet the expectations of Canadians struggling to make ends meet during tough economic times by reaching across the aisle to develop concrete long-term economic solutions that will be beneficial to hardworking Canadians.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Sudbury was talking about infrastructure. The federal government has invested \$33 billion in the building Canada fund and \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to municipalities. We have made historic investments in infrastructure, yet his party votes against all these measures.

The member talks about the economy. He is from Sudbury, yet his party brought forward legislation in the last Parliament, Bill C-301 and Bill C-311, that would essentially shut down the mining industry in Canada.

If the member is serious about stimulating the economy, would he please support this government's initiatives, rather than voting against them? Would his party please stop bringing forward legislation or policies that would shut down the Canadian economy, particularly the very important mining sector?

• (1645)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I was able to hear a good portion of the question from my hon. colleague the minister. If I do not answer it all, it is because I did not hear the first part of it.

The minister mentioned Bill C-311 as having been introduced by the New Democrats. For clarification, that was not in the last Parliament. It was introduced by the Liberal Party, so not all of us were involved with that.

In relation to what is happening right now, the minister talked about what was in the past. What we are talking about is now, and organizations like the BMO and the IMF are saying that right now is not the time for austerity budgets. What we have coming forward from the Conservative government is an austerity budget. We are going to be seeing cutting and slashing of programs when what we should be doing is investing in infrastructure and creating jobs to ensure that Canadians are working. That is what we on this side of the House are proposing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pose a question on an important issue as I try to understand the NDP position on the whole idea of job creation.

We in the Liberal Party have made that our issue coming into this, saying, “Jobs, jobs, jobs.” We hear that in terms of what the New Democrats are equally concerned about, yet there is a major policy decision with regard to the buy America provisions that were brought in.

Could the member give a clear-cut answer with respect to whether the NDP supports the buy America provisions that were introduced in the United States recently, or does the NDP believe those provisions are detrimental to the Canadian economy and that the government should fight to oppose them?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Canada is a trading nation. I think it is very important to recognize that.

When we say that, we always hear from the opposite side about free trade. What we always talk about is fair trade. We would like to see fair trade agreements.

When we talk about the buy America procurement policies that are coming forward, we want to ensure that anything that is coming forward does not affect or hurt workers. We need to ensure, as we are all saying on this side of the House, that it relates to jobs, jobs, jobs.

We need to ensure that any trade policy is fair and that we are protecting workers' rights.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to a significant degree small businesses are the backbone of Canada.

We have huge tax cuts for large corporations—greater than any other country in the G8, as the Minister of Finance has bragged. However, a lot of that money is going to exorbitant CEO salaries and is being reinvested in the United States, whereas small business tax cuts would stimulate our economy and stay locally invested.

I wonder if the member might like to add to that and comment on what we should be doing for small business.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question and for all his work relating to small businesses in the last Parliament and in this Parliament as well.

The question is bang on. What we should be looking at doing is supporting small and medium-sized businesses across the country. There are large corporate tax breaks for the large banks and the oil companies that are making billions and billions in profits, while the small mom-and-pop shops in our local communities are struggling to make ends meet.

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We need to flip that. We need to ensure that our small businesses are getting the support they need. That is something we talked about during the last election and it is something we will continue to push for on this side of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak in the House to support the motion from the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park. This motion is particularly important in this economic context, which is so difficult, dangerous and worrying for Canadians. Our fellow Canadians are overburdened with debt and are stuck in low-paying, precarious jobs that have limited prospects for the future. Unlike the rosy world this government repeatedly talks about, the reality is far different for most people. Prospects for the future are bleak for all of us. Here are some powerful examples.

The Conference Board of Canada says that the gap between the rich and the poor in this country has been widening for the past 15 years. And it is widening at a faster pace than it did in the United States over the same period, which threatens the fundamental Canadian values of justice and equality in our society.

In addition, Charles Sirois, chair of the CIBC board, and Stephen Jarislowsky, a major Montreal investor, are worried about how dependent the Canadian economy is on the development and export of our natural resources. These two men, who have decades of expertise in global economic issues, believe that our economy—with its lack of diversity—cannot handle the challenges we face from emerging countries.

In the wake of major American investor Warren Buffett's statement, highly respected businessman Jean Coutu also expressed his belief that there is a completely incomprehensible fiscal imbalance and, as a result, he pays too little in taxes as compared to the Canadian public. He is therefore calling on the government to make the tax system fairer and more equitable so that he can do his part.

Contrary to this government, the NDP is advocating an economic approach that has worked for a long time. For a long time, the state has had a key economic role to play; to deny this is to turn a blind eye to the truth. Historically, we can see that periods that were the most economically successful in the long term achieved that success through major state intervention. When the state sets a strong and clear common goal of development, with rules of good governance and fairness on the markets, growth is impressive and sustainable.

The thirty glorious years provide an excellent example of economic measures to adopt when the economy is going downhill. Let us remember that, during that period, taxpayers' dollars were used to rebuild Europe, develop infrastructure, strengthen companies in North America and implement universal social programs that, for a long time, guaranteed a solid education system, health benefits that were accessible to everyone and the opportunity for most to retire with dignity.

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All this is threatened by the economic approach of this government, which is irrationally obsessed with its weight, to the detriment of overall economic health. To paraphrase the great economist John Kenneth Galbraith, if it were only money at stake, we would not necessarily have much to worry about, but the plight of the millions of people who will suffer as a result of the action taken by this government is a matter of very great concern. It must be the main focus of our concern. In other words, we see that there are two conflicting visions of the economy in this House: that of the government, where finance takes precedence over the individual, and that of the NDP, where the individual is the centre of the economy. This could boil down to a simple ideological debate but, even then, the inescapable reality supports the NDP's approach.

• (1650)

First of all, one of the founding fathers of economics, Adam Smith, after making a harsh observation about the reality of his time, condemned that reality by advocating a moral approach to economic issues, an approach that took human needs into account. But unfortunately, Adam Smith was taken hostage by a simplistic economic vision endorsed by the Chicago school, which underhandedly did away with Mr. Smith's conclusions, maintaining only the observation and establishing it as dogma.

This sectarian approach has been very costly for many countries, especially in Latin America. Consider the example of Argentina, which went through a many lean years after applying measures similar to those proposed by this government. In addition, many Conservative governments in Canada have gone down paths similar to the one this government is taking, with disappointing and sometimes even disastrous results. To refresh everyone's memories, consider the following examples: the budgetary and economic trials and tribulations of the Diefenbaker government led to his defeat in 1962, when the public deficit had ballooned after a series of tax cuts—what a surprise—and after the value of the Canadian dollar dropped considerably compared to the American dollar; the Mulroney government ended a nine-year reign with an abysmal deficit of \$42 billion as the ugly result; some 20 years ago, the Grant Devine government in Saskatchewan left the province's finances in ruins. After that, an NDP government led by Roy Romanow took over and in the early 1990s, despite the burden it inherited, it accomplished the amazing feat of achieving the first balanced budget of any government in Canada, whether provincial or federal.

The damage to the Conservatives' reputation at that time and later was so great that they had to reinvent themselves under another name, the Saskatchewan Party.

But the best example is the Ontario government of Mike Harris, which dismantled social programs and Ontario Hydro to the ongoing and costly detriment of the province's taxpayers. If we heed the debates raging in the current Ontario election campaign, the Harris legacy is still strong. The question is: do we want that kind of legacy?

In another part of the world, in Denmark, where a social democratic government was recently elected after 10 years of a depressing coalition of the right obsessed with austerity and border security, the new left-leaning prime minister is going to invest more than \$3 billion in her country's small, rich and egalitarian economy.

Despite the fact that it has few natural resources, and personal income taxes of up to 60% as well as a 25% sales tax, Denmark's per capita GDP is comparable to that of Canada. What is even more interesting is that employment rates for all age brackets are invariably higher in Denmark than in Canada. Denmark invests heavily in education, research and development, and in its workforce, whereas Canada relies too heavily on the abundance of its natural resources as justification for a laissez-faire attitude that puts us at the mercy of economic ups and downs.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, the government must adopt an economic approach that concentrates on specialization, that is the processing of goods, in order to control a larger portion of what is called the distribution chain. In short, our country exports too many raw resources for processing abroad. We recently came to an astounding realization: employment in manufacturing, which was previously significant, is rapidly decreasing. This realization only reinforces the NDP position: Canada's competitiveness requires the diversification of activities and strategic support for sectors that create employment in order to ensure that the Canadian economy is not governed solely by the "invisible hand" of the market.

• (1655)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my NDP colleague for providing us with a very interesting and informative overview of other models.

Canada's situation is often compared to the situation in the U.S., but there are some very clear differences between the two countries. We are always inclined to want to imitate the U.S. model, even though it is not in line with Canadian values.

The hon. member touched on the issue of the growing gap between the wealth of a few and the impoverishment of many in Canada. I would like him to elaborate on that point and explain the societal cost of this growing gap between the rich and the poor.

• (1700)

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

I do not have enough time to sum up all the consequences major disparities have on a society. To take the U.S. example, in comparison with other more egalitarian societies in the world, many problems of all kinds are related to the low standard of living and low incomes, including health problems and problems entering the workforce. The larger the gap gets, the more we see the middle class disappear. It is a problem that is only going to get worse. It is currently not being addressed, even though it should be a priority for the future.

[English]

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and this government are far apart on a lot of issues, but maybe no other issue as greatly as taxes.

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In 2006 we promised the Canadian people that we would reduce the GST. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6%, and then to 5%, fulfilling our promise. However, the NDP actually voted against that reduction. Not only did it vote against it, but it said it was proud of the fact that it stood against it. Recently, the finance critic said, "Cuts to the GST...They take us in the wrong direction. I am very proud that our caucus stood opposed to that direction".

I would like to ask the member this. Does he still take the position that New Democrats are proud that they stood against a tax reduction for ordinary Canadians to give them some relief?

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for asking that question, because reducing the GST and corporate taxes at the same time was a serious problem. It is taking us down the same path as the Diefenbaker and Mulroney governments and, to borrow an American example, the government of President Ronald Reagan.

We must remember that taxes are a way to gather the means to achieve certain goals. Obviously, some people do not believe in that.

By reducing taxes, the government lost out on a huge amount of tax income. Now the government has an enormous amount of catching up to do and I believe that this is a questionable way to justify cuts that would not be justifiable under other circumstances. It will lead to the loss of services and it will hurt ordinary people, not to mention the other long-term consequences for our economy.

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to take part in this debate today. I have been listening to a lot of it this afternoon and it has been quite an interesting discussion between two sides of the House.

In defence of my colleagues in the NDP, it was interesting to hear the member for Markham—Unionville saying that the NDP had changed its position and had come to his side. In fact, the NDP has consistently held its view, but the Liberals have completely changed their position. The member for Markham—Unionville used to be in favour of lowering taxes as a way to stimulate jobs and create investments. Therefore, I think we should say that the NDP has been consistent and the Liberals have changed. The NDP may not be consistently right, in my point of view, but it has been consistent and I appreciate that.

As we all know, this is a time of global economic turbulence. We are following the markets every day and, certainly in Europe, nations are in severe trouble because of their debt situations. There are countries like Greece that have taken on unsustainable levels of debt and are having a very difficult time dealing with it. We see the situation in the United States, which has not experienced the level of job creation that we have here in Canada, unfortunately, and it is obviously causing some real hardship for the world economy as well.

We understand that, the finance minister understands that, and so does the Prime Minister. That is why the finance minister has been very active with his counterparts across the globe in terms of finance ministers and central bank governors. He and the Governor of the

Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, were recently in Washington for IMF, World Bank and OECD meetings.

It has been necessary to respond to this global challenging time, especially to the global recession in 2008-09. There was a concerted response from OECD countries from the G20 both in terms of monetary policy and fiscal stimulus. That is certainly one reason why we argue that the situation here in Canada has been relatively better than the situation in most industrialized countries.

To look at promoting job growth and job creation, which is what this motion talks about, we argue that we have a very strong record in that sense. We have created approximately 600,000 jobs. I should not say "we". The private sector has created 600,000 jobs since July 2009. In fact, if we look at the past year, there has been extraordinary job creation growth, especially in terms of full-time employment. There has been some very good numbers in terms of job creation.

The member opposite was saying that it is not the government that creates jobs. However, it is the government that puts in place the policies that enable job creation to occur. It was the government, in November 2007, that introduced a long-term plan to reduce taxes for small and medium-sized businesses that enabled job creation to go forward. Actually, it was pressing in terms of timing because it enabled some measures to take place before we were hit by the fiscal crisis in 2008.

We are very much focused on the economy. We are very much focused on growth. We are also focused on the prudent management of taxpayers' dollars.

It is interesting to hear the opposition talk about being in a period of austerity now; we were in a period of stimulus and now we are in a period of austerity. I would encourage them to reread the budget that was passed in June of this year. There are increases in this budget: 6% per annum to 2014 and beyond for health care; 3% per year for education and social assistance; research and development, which was praised by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada; clean energy research; and things like neurological research. There are some strategic investments going forward and there are many other measures that I will touch upon as well, especially with respect to small businesses.

We understand that small businesses generate a lot of the growth in this country. We understand that they are the primary employers of people in this country and that is exactly why we have put in place certain policies. I would like to emphasize these policies, such as: reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%; and raising the amount of business income eligible for that rate from \$300,000 to \$400,000 to \$500,000.

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We did that for small businesses to enable them to create more jobs. It enables them to keep more of their own revenues and to invest more for themselves, their business and their employees. As small businesses grow, they will also benefit from the reduction in the general corporate income tax rate, which will be 15% in 2012.

● (1705)

There has been a lot of talk in the chamber about how these tax reductions only benefit certain types of companies, and we hear banks and oil companies mentioned all the time.

It is important to note that if a business has an income above \$500,000, that business will pay the higher federal corporate tax rate right now of 16.5%. A business with an income of \$600,000 is not a massive enterprise in Canada.

People need to understand it is not just about reducing tax rates for certain industries, whether it is oil and gas or the financial sector; it is about reducing it for every single business in this country that has business income above that \$500,000 rate. I would hope all members would recognize that that includes a lot of small- and medium-size enterprises that we all admit are the primary generators of jobs in this country. That needs to be recognized.

In terms of lowering business taxes, as I mentioned, the economic update in the fall of 2007, which basically laid out this five year plan for reducing taxes, was to ensure that we were competitive on a global basis.

I would encourage members to go to the OECD website and look at the general corporate tax rates of certain countries. Countries like Chile, Sweden, and the Netherlands, countries that we are competing with, have tax rates very similar to ours. If we combine our federal tax rate of 16.5% generally with a provincial rate of about 10%, that totals 26.5%. We hope it will be 25% combined in January 2012. This makes us very competitive with a lot of these countries. Members should go to the OECD site to see where Canada fits in that.

A lot of people across the aisle will say that the Americans have higher taxes on businesses than we do. Yes, they do, but in our view that is the wrong approach. They have a lot more loopholes and they have a higher overall tax rate. What we are doing as a government is lowering the overall rate but aggressively going after some of the loopholes, which I think some members on the other side of the aisle do support. If we want more jobs, if we want higher wages, if we want this business tax advantage, then we have to follow this approach.

I did refer to the OECD in terms of where we fit in, but I would like to quote the OECD. It recently declared that Canada's corporate income tax reductions "should lower the cost of capital and buttress investment intentions. These advances...drive productivity gains and enhance employment prospects." The fact is that the OECD has recognized what Canada has done and continues to do.

I would like to return to what I was saying about what was in the budget that we passed in June.

The first thing I would like to talk about is the hiring credit for small business. It is a hiring credit of up to \$1,000 against an employer's increase in 2011 for EI premiums over those paid in

2010. This is a very important point. I suspect frankly that there are members on the other side of the House who support this initiative. It was brought forward by some very responsible groups, like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in terms of what we can do to assist these small businesses.

This temporary hiring credit for small business will be available to approximately 525,000 employers whose total EI premiums were at or below \$10,000 in 2010, which will reduce their 2011 payroll costs by about \$165 million. This is very important. I would challenge members on the other side to indicate whether or not they support this initiative, and if not, why not. If they do support it, then they should consider supporting the economic action plan that we are putting forward.

We have also taken a lot of action in terms of small business through business financing programs. I would like to highlight some of those initiatives.

The Canada small business financing program supports about \$1 billion in loans to approximately 7,500 small businesses each year to either help them get started or to expand. Our government increased the maximum loan amount under this program from \$250,000 to \$500,000, of which up to \$350,000 can be used for equipment and leasehold improvements. This is part of our economic action plan.

This is important as well, because one of the main points small businesses will make is the challenge they face in terms of access and capital. They have raised it with all of us as their members of Parliament. They will often go to a financial institution and have a tough time either accessing capital or accessing it at a cost they can afford in order to expand their business or hire more people. This obviously helps those small businesses address that problem directly.

We are doing more especially for small- and medium-size businesses. We are cutting red tape.

● (1710)

As of 2009, we have eliminated almost 80,000 red tape requirements for small- and medium-size businesses. To build on that, earlier this year we launched the Red Tape Reduction Commission to find even more ways to reduce the burden of federal regulatory requirements on Canadian enterprises.

In the next phase of the economic action plan, we have also included a number of additional initiatives, including support to make our BizPaL initiative permanent. This initiative enables businesses to go online to complete all their requirements. This online service significantly reduces the red tape burden on small business owners by allowing them to quickly and efficiently access the necessary permits and licences from all levels of government to operate their specific businesses.

Finally in this area, we committed that the Canada Revenue Agency will consult with the business community and key stakeholders to identify opportunities to further improve its services and reduce the administrative burden while respecting the overall integrity of the tax system.

With all of these initiatives recognizing the importance of small business within the Canadian economy, it is no wonder that the president of the CFIB, Catherine Swift, has said:

In this Year of the Entrepreneur, we give credit to the government for continuing to work to balance its books while finding important, low-cost ways to help small firms grow the economy. With measures focusing on reducing red tape, the introduction of an Employment Insurance (EI) tax credit and better transparency and accountability at Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), government took some important steps to enhance job creation and recognize the economic contributions of small businesses in Canada.

Our government has done this because we believe the best way to build a more competitive economy is to create a business environment that allows the large and small private sector businesses and employers who employ the vast majority of Canadians to succeed and to expand, not stand in the way of their success with high taxes and needless red tape. It is working and we should continue down that road.

The IMF was mentioned by my friend across the way earlier. I would like to quote the IMF as well:

Canada is actually matching up quite well on a relative basis....[T]he recession was not too deep, they haven't had a financial crisis to the extent that the US has had or the Europeans are having it. And so all in all Canada is actually doing quite well.

We continue to encourage the spark of entrepreneurial creativity in Canada with a number of important initiatives which we target at small business entrepreneurship. Another example is we provided the Canadian Youth Business Foundation with support, giving young entrepreneurs access to business loans and mentoring services as they start up and operate new businesses. That mentoring aspect is very important. There is an initiative in Alberta called Productivity Alberta which is about people with a lot of experience, particularly in the manufacturing sector, mentoring some younger people in the manufacturing sector. That mentoring of the next generation of business leaders is as important as or even more important than access to financing.

In terms of the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, this is on top of the federal small business internship program that each year helps about 400 students across Canada gain valuable experience and helps entrepreneurs adopt competitive e-business practices. This was obviously well received. The Canadian Youth Business Foundation said this:

This contribution will allow CYBF to continue to support the ideas, the innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit of Canada's youth, ultimately creating jobs and strengthening our economy.

In this same spirit, the government is also providing \$15 million on an annual basis to support the Canada business network. This provides essential information to help business owners start up and grow their businesses, all available through a national website, a national toll-free telephone line, and 13 regional service centres.

In terms of some EI measures that are directly targeted toward job creators, especially toward smaller businesses, our plan that we announced in March and then in June, which was passed, is going to

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provide \$420 million to renew two special EI measures for a year. First, the working while on claim measure will allow EI claimants to earn additional money while receiving income support. This will be renewed until August 2012. Second, the best 14 weeks measure allows claimants in 25 regions of higher unemployment to have their EI benefits calculated based on the highest 14 weeks of earnings over the year preceding a claim. This will be renewed until June 2012.

There obviously is a number of initiatives that are designed to help especially people in some very challenging areas. We have certain regions which are experiencing very high economic activity and certain regions which are not. We are very cognizant of that fact and we are responding to it.

• (1715)

As an aside, at some of the round tables I have been doing with some of the small businesses in my area, when I ask what the greatest challenge is, many will say that their biggest challenge is access to people, finding enough people who will work in their enterprises. It goes across all sizes of business.

There was an individual in my office recently. He is my age. He is a very young CEO. He said that he could hire 75 people for his service business today, but he simply could not find them. Perry at the Denham Inn in Leduc said that he needs about six people. He put out the notice, received replies from 38 people who had an interest, but all 38 people turned him down. He looked at me and asked what he should do because he needs people. This is one of our challenges going forward. Even as we have a relatively high unemployment rate, there are going to be businesses that increasingly find it a challenge to find people, whether it is skilled or unskilled labour.

I also want to highlight the initiative that dealt with rural physicians. It was in the budget and it was mentioned in the last election campaign as well. Starting in 2012-13, practising family physicians will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

By getting doctors and nurses into our rural communities, and my riding certainly has a rural part, we are helping all Canadians access essential health care services no matter where they live in this country.

Another aspect of our program that I would like to highlight is the whole trading agenda. It is interesting. An economist from a bank was talking about the response to the Great Depression, Herbert Hoover and all of this. I find it quite farcical, frankly. If we look at what the response was in the 1930s, it was one of raising tariffs, shutting down trade, and raising taxes.

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What our government has been doing, especially two budgets ago, is eliminating tariffs. We are now eliminating tariffs especially as inputs for the manufacturing sector. The other thing we are doing is embarking on a very aggressive trade agenda. We realize that we have to diversify our trade. We are obviously very closely linked to the United States, with 85% or so of our trade linked to the United States. We need to expand and diversify our markets. That is why the Prime Minister did his southern tour this summer, to really work on those markets to expand and diversify our trade opportunities. Countries like Colombia and Brazil are prime opportunities for us.

It is interesting, even when asking companies in my riding how they are doing on their exports, a lot of them will say that in terms of their U.S. exports, they are down about 25% or 30%, but their exports to Brazil have taken almost all of that up. If we focus on diversifying trade, we are obviously going to be helping many of these companies.

I want to talk about our response on the innovation side. Again, I would return to the rhetoric. Many opposition members are saying that we are now in an austerity period. We are not in an austerity period. We are still in a fiscal period of stimulus where we are strategically investing.

One of the areas we are investing in is research and development and innovation. We obviously did that through programs like the knowledge infrastructure program in terms of actual infrastructure at universities and colleges across the country. We are also investing in people through the three federal research granting councils which received increased funding. We are addressing things like the indirect cost of research, which universities and colleges have raised with us for years.

I would like to quote the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada:

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada strongly welcomes the Government of Canada's continued support for university research and international engagement as announced in Budget 2011.

"We're pleased with the strengthened investment in university research and innovation in this budget".... "This support will increase Canada's capacity for discovery and innovation, and enhance the university learning experience for all students."

"This budget represents tremendous progress for the university sector: more funding for the research councils, promotion of international educational marketing, additional support for students, and a range of measures to foster innovation and research."

The president of the University of Alberta, of which I am an alumnus, praised it in terms of our response on the innovation and research agenda.

In closing, I want to emphasize it is a time of global economic uncertainty, but the government is on the right path in terms of continuing to strategically invest while continuing to respect taxpayer dollars and moving towards a position where we can balance our budget by 2014-15.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for his interest in small business. I hope that the next time the NDP proposes a 2 percentage point drop

in the small business tax rate, to bring it from 11% to 9%, that he will vote in favour.

To get back to the debate, the Conference Board of Canada indicated last week that the gap between the wealthy and the middle class is growing rapidly. I would like to know whether the Conservative government is committed to reversing course and closing the gap between the wealthy and the middle class.

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the NDP proposal to reduce it to 9%. However, I would point out for the member that when we reduced it from 12% to 11%, the NDP opposed that measure. It also opposed the measure with respect to the overall business tax reductions.

He raises a valid question with respect to what we do in terms of a gap between people who are wealthier and people who are struggling.

One of the measures I am most proud of, in terms of what this government has done, is the working income tax benefit. This measure was introduced a number of years ago to assist people who were moving from social assistance into the workforce. When they do that, they often lose an awful lot of benefits. When they get into the workforce and start working, they find it harder to make ends meet because they have an awful lot more expenses. The working income tax benefit is designed to help people at that level so, as they move up, they can move up much more quickly and they do not face that real hardship at the point where they move from social assistance to the workforce.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to let members in on a little secret. The hon. member is quite fond of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but he cannot say so publicly, otherwise he would be run out of his caucus.

I want to get the hon. member's comments on the paragraph with respect to fiscal sustainability in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's reported dated today. It states:

PBO's debt-to-GDP projection indicates that the current federal and provincial-territorial fiscal structure is not sustainable over the long term given projected demographic and economic trends. PBO estimates that permanent and immediate fiscal actions – either through increased taxes or reduced program spending, or some combination of both – amounting to 2.7 per cent of GDP annually would be required to ensure that the net debt-to-GDP ratio does not ultimately rise above its current level.

In other words, in English, it is debt to the horizon for as long as can be projected unless something changes, either by raising the taxes, or reducing program spending, or some combination thereof.

Given that in the last sentence in his presentation he said that we were on track to be balanced by 2015, does he not think the PBO has it right, that this is debt to the horizon for the foreseeable future?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, the confession I would have is I am fond of that member. I am not sure how that affects my standing in my own caucus, but I have served on the finance committee with him and he is an excellent parliamentarian.

He raises a valid question. I would point out, though, that the PBO combined both provincial and federal debt. In fact, if we read the report carefully, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is much more critical of provinces in general, and specific provinces: We are having an election in Ontario. I am not supposed to delve into this, but I think he is quite critical of the provincial Liberal government in Ontario with respect to what it is doing with its finances.

I know he respects the IMF very much, but the IMF forecasted that Canada would continue to have, by far, the lowest total government net debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire G7, 33% in 2016 compared with the G7 average of 92%.

In terms of provincial governments, that is obviously something the federal government does not control. We as Conservatives are very respectful of provincial autonomy. Therefore, as a citizen of Ontario, that is something he will have to address on October 6.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Edmonton—Leduc and I have great respect for him. He served on the industry committee as chair. Now he serves as the finance chair. There are very few members in the House who have a handle on the file that my friend from Edmonton—Leduc does.

The question was raised a number of times about raising the taxes. We hear in the House so often that we have to get those oil companies and get those banks.

As the member comes from the area with the world's third largest oil reserves, the oil sands, could he tell us why the policies that we advocate on this side of the House are the right policies? Maybe he could just touch on the huge demand for employment and tie that into it as well.

• (1730)

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, the member for Chatham-Kent—Essex, whom I sit with on the finance committee, is exactly right.

What we have to understand in this place is what David Emerson said to me shortly after he left office. He said, "The fundamental fact about economic life is that it is a supply chain".

For anyone who comes to northern Alberta or to my constituency, if they go to the Nisku Industrial Park and go into a plant and asked where their materials come from, they will be told they are from Ontario, New Brunswick or Quebec. If they asked who the company is partnering with, it will name companies across the country.

If individuals were to come down to Ponoka, they would see Almita Piling inc. It recently did the pilings for the solar farm in Renfrew, Ontario, but it got the materials in Ontario and a lot of the engineering work there.

That is the way the economy works. That is why, when we play these regional games where we target certain areas, and Alberta unfortunately tends to be targeted quite a lot, we hurt ourselves. We are so integrated as an economy, not only within Canada but within North America. Everything is a supply chain. We have to keep in mind what David Emerson said.

I want to acknowledge the member's work. I see the member for Oshawa and the other member whose exact riding I forget. The four

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of us and as well as members on the opposite side worked on something called accelerated capital cost allowance for the manufacturing sector. We had that in a February 2007 committee report. It was in the March 2007 budget. It is extended in this budget. That was adopted unanimously in a parliamentary report in 2007.

That is one big reason why every member of the House should support the budgets and the economic action plan of the government.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, during the hon. member's speech, he mentioned a couple of companies in his area that could not find workers. This morning I met with the first nations in my office. One of their biggest complaints is they cannot get enough money for education and for training their youth so they can go out into the workforce and be employed.

Would the hon. member agree with me that the government should give INAC more money so it can educate and train their young people so they can go work to places looking for workers?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, the member raises a valid question on how to specifically address this. There is obviously increased payments to all the provinces in terms of funding for education, but one of the challenges is a lot of the provincial education money does not get to first nations people who are on reserves.

In terms of education and training, I absolutely agree it is essential. On present labour and future labour, our first nations communities should be the first places we should look at for training and education.

I point out that there are some excellent programs. Eric Newell, the former chancellor of the University of Alberta and the former president of Syncrude, has an outstanding record in that sector and across Canada in terms of employing aboriginals, in partnership with the program pathways to education, and encouraging aboriginal people to finish high school.

That is the first step. A key period on which we should focus is having students finish high school and then going on to a trade school or university. This should be our primary source of finding young people to work in all of our communities.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak today about the increasingly obvious issue of poverty as well as the growing gap between the rich and the poor in this country. I agree with my colleagues, who are outraged at this government's lack of action. It is not taking concrete measures to deal with an alarming economic situation that is affecting Canada and all of its communities.

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I think it is time for the government to take its head out of the sand. While it brags to potential foreign investors and the media about how strong and safe our economy is in these tumultuous times, it needs to understand that Canadians are not stupid and they know how fragile the country's economy really is. Numerous recent reports paint a very different picture of the reality all Canadians will have to face, if they have not faced it already.

A recent Conference Board report says that the gap between the rich and poor in Canada is widening, even more than in the United States. What is worse, Canada had the fourth largest increase in that gap among the 17 most industrialized countries. Obviously this is an unacceptable situation and urgent measures must be taken to strengthen the country's economic policy and provide more fair and equal distribution for everyone.

In light of this, it is quite understandable that Canadians wonder why the government is choosing to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

When a country is going through difficult times that could jeopardize its economic health, every second counts. Although other countries around the world seem to be experiencing even greater difficulties than we are, globalization means that our economy is very dependent on events beyond our borders. Therefore, the government must make a commitment to the voters and implement appropriate and equitable initiatives that will protect our economy, create jobs and ensure a well-deserved retirement for our seniors and a prosperous future for our youth. The government must be accountable for its actions and ensure the economic protection of the people. The solution to poverty is to be proactive and not passively implement reactive measures that come too late and are often inadequate.

In the National Council of Welfare's fall 2011 report, the chairperson indicates that readers will see a disturbing picture of poverty in Canada. He also confirms that the toll of poverty on the Canadian economy is too high, and I share that sentiment. To back up what I am saying, here are a few examples.

In 2007, the public cost of poverty, that is, government expenditures—and we have not even mentioned the private cost of poverty—totalled \$24.4 billion. This figure is twice the poverty gap, which is the amount of money required to bring all Canadians out of poverty. Can Canadians afford to carry this fiscal burden when studies prove that investments in well-being are more profitable in the long term? The answer is no.

The annual cost of housing an offender in a prison cell is up to 10 times greater than the cost of supervised housing. We know very well that thousands of prisoners are incarcerated for minor crimes, that they have mental health issues, and that they do not receive adequate care for their conditions because of a lack of resources.

Twenty per cent of health care costs are directly related to socio-economic gaps. If the population that is in a precarious financial situation was not in that position, it would be healthier and more able to work.

At this point in time, the Canadian economy is losing between \$3.5 billion and \$5 billion dollars a year because the skills and

experience of immigrant workers are not recognized. These are just a few examples of what poverty costs all Canadians every day.

Other troubling figures also confirm the concerns of Canadians, including the people of my riding who have trusted me to represent them. While poverty among families and seniors is becoming a major source of concern, which the government must pay more attention to, the unemployment rate among young people, even though they are healthy and well qualified, continues to rise.

If the government still believes that Canada's economy will survive the global economic turmoil, why is Canada's labour market so stagnant? Why are Canadian families finding it harder and harder to make ends meet and why are they being forced to drastically lower their standard of living in order to survive?

• (1735)

At this time, we all know that the labour market is weaker than it was even before the financial crisis in 2008. Canada has recorded a net job loss for the first time since last March. In question period, the government boasts about the fact that it has created 600,000 net jobs. We cannot help but wonder about the beginning and end dates of that job creation.

According to Statistics Canada, in August 2011 employment was little changed for the second consecutive month and the unemployment rate edged up slightly to 7.3%. In the past 12 months, employment has grown by 1.3% and 223,000 jobs were created, primarily in Ontario and Alberta, and in the private sector. That is nowhere near 600,000 jobs. Where do those 600,000 net jobs come from, the ones several ministers, including the Prime Minister, keep talking about in question period?

Economists everywhere and the major banks have had to lower their growth forecasts.

Canadians are worried about their retirement and their savings for when they are older.

Madam Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I apologize for not mentioning it earlier.

The overall debt of the average Canadian family has now reached a record level—previously established at 150%. Families with two parents working full-time who used to be middle class are now on the low end of the income scale. Canadian families are suffocating and in debt. They do not have enough money and they do not have time to work more because they are already working as many hours as they can.

The unemployment rate among students reached 17.2% this summer, an increase of over 3% as compared to the rate before the 2008 recession. Students represent the workforce of the future; if they manage to graduate, they are the ones who will be actively participating in our collective growth by paying taxes. Without jobs, the cost of living is too high for students to be able to make ends meet, which leads them to drop out of school.

Is this the dark and difficult future that the government wants to offer these people? It seems clear to me that the government is completely out of touch with the everyday lives of voters and is not taking their situations into account when it implements strict measures and makes drastic budget cuts. Just when Canadians need the government—when they need support and resources to get their heads above water—the government is letting them down.

The numbers speak for themselves. If the government is bragging about keeping the Canadian economy healthy, it needs to redo its calculations. There are good economic strategies and there are optimal strategies. There is a huge difference between spending and investing and the government must recognize that once and for all. Why does the government not see spending to combat poverty as an investment in society?

Maximizing our collective wealth potential depends on full employment. That is why the government must act now to develop a clear and optimal national strategy that will attack poverty directly at the source of the problem rather than adopting strategies that only treat the symptoms.

If Canada is trying to help people survive poverty, I will admit that we are having some success. However, what the government is doing now has significant social costs. If, on the other hand, we want to work together to eliminate poverty and its costly effects, we must adopt a different approach.

What the NDP is proposing in its motion is a true investment strategy in order to optimize Canadian resources, a strategy whose benefits will be seen and felt in the long term. This is a strategy that puts more emphasis on preventing poverty than on spending once the harm has already been done.

• (1740)

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the points that the NDP member has made regarding poverty, income inequality, some of the government's failures on the economy, and youth unemployment.

I have a different angle. There is no such thing as a general case. There are areas where unemployment is the biggest problem. However, according to the business community and the individuals I have talked to, there are parts of the country where there are simply no skilled people to fill the jobs there. I heard this in rural Canada and I heard it today at a skilled trades councils conference. What they are looking for from the government is a job creation program. That is what is missing. It is not in the motion.

Is it not important to the member and the NDP that there be a jobs plan that actually addresses the gap in skilled workers, which will be huge within the next 10 years, and gets rid of the barriers to mobility, apprenticeship and training?

• (1745)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for what she said. One of the solutions to the skilled labour shortage would be to recognize the credentials of newcomers to Canada, who are overqualified for the work they are doing.

Business of Supply

I will give the example of one of my constituents, a Vietnamese dentist who arrived in Canada. Thanks to employment assistance agencies, she managed to find a dental assistant position after redoing some courses. She was asked to redo her entire education—secondary school, CEGEP and university—in order to be able to do her job. We are denying ourselves a worker and many other workers who are in the same situation. They could be improving the labour market and meeting the needs of the employers.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for her eloquent speech. I was very glad to hear her talk about the gaps between the rich and the poor and the long-term cost of that to society.

In her opinion, what new or existing mechanisms could the government use to narrow those gaps?

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

This is not the first time we are hearing about pauperization. This is not the first time we are seeing a growing gap between the rich and the poor. This trend goes back several decades. This trend was anticipated and strongly criticized by everyone working in community organizations to improve our society.

The NDP developed a platform to support families. We called for a decrease in the tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses to 9%. It is a matter of helping employers hire more employees and lowering the tax rate. The government opposite is telling us that it has made an effort. It has, to a certain point, but we are asking it to go further and not to include these measures in a broader policy, which forces us to vote against their good measures, instead of being able to support them and to weed out the good from the bad.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member of Parliament for Parkdale—High Park, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Monday, October 3, 2011, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this opposition day motion.

Business of Supply

Just this week economists before the finance committee commented on the situation that Canada faces during this current economic turmoil. They were nearly unanimous in their view that due to the lack of investment by the business community combined with Canadians' personal debt burden neither would be likely to stimulate our economy in this time of need. We were told there are some \$500 billion that corporations are holding onto. In fairness to corporations, when we consider the experience they had in the recent lending crunch in the last recession it is quite understandable that they would want to protect their cash assets not knowing what the next months and years might bring.

The economists were united in stating that it was time for the government to take up the slack in our economy and invest in our infrastructure. Today in Canada there is a 7.3% unemployment rate. New Democrats believe that it is closer to 11% when we include the people in society who have given up and lost hope. Really we are saying that one in ten Canadians is not working or contributing to our economy and, in many cases, he or she is sadly nosediving into poverty.

Last week the Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton released a report about seniors poverty. As members will know, in the last session I was the critic for seniors and pensions, but the member for London—Fanshawe has taken over the seniors part of it. This report was very striking. It reported that 7.5% of seniors in Hamilton live in poverty and the rate of poverty among senior women is double that of senior men.

During the last session, I stood in this place month after month calling for the government to dramatically increase the guaranteed income supplement to deal with this untenable situation of seniors poverty. The government responded and in its budget gave them \$50 a month as an increase to the guaranteed income supplement. That is a pittance. We need to understand that seniors are living on about \$15,200 a year. The poverty line is above \$22,000 a year. When I say that \$50 is a pittance, I am glad we no longer hear it being trumpeted in the House because it was very troubling to hear that day in and day out.

New Democrats know what is needed. The government needs to stop talking about its record and stop trumpeting its recent electoral victory. Conservatives are the government of the day. It is a victory that cannot be used to once again justify putting on the blinders when it comes to dealing with the needs of Canadians across our country who are facing a crisis. Conservatives continually repeat in this place that they have a clear majority. A clear majority of 61% of Canadians did not vote for the Conservatives or their agenda.

We need spending that is targeted to: real job creators; the \$130 billion deficit in our infrastructure, as identified by the Canadian Federation of Municipalities; construction and the repair of roads and bridges, like the bridge in Montreal; and, public transit. Discussions are taking place regarding a Quebec to Chicago high-speed rail link. There are examples of things that we could be doing.

We also need to target the training and retraining of Canada's workforce. When I was a school board trustee in Hamilton there was a dropout rate of about 28%. In so doing, those people were isolating themselves from being part of the economy. We all understand the need for education and retraining. In my community of roughly

500,000 there are over 112,000 people living in poverty. We need to find a way to bridge the gap between these people and work. Over the next five to eight years employers are going to be crying out for skilled workers.

● (1750)

One of the presenters at our committee today was from a community college. That individual talked about the gap that is going to be there even with our new immigration policy. The gap figure that we will not be able to fill was 30% I believe. Yet, we have people living in poverty who have the capacity to work, if we can find a way to bridge them to that work.

I want to quote Glen Hodgson, the chief economist for the Conference Board of Canada, who was one of the presenters at committee. He said, "We believe that we're severely under-invested as a country in infrastructure. We haven't got the numbers, but others have, engineers have, the federation of municipalities has, and I think their number of going back five years was a deficit of about \$130 billion in terms of infrastructure investment".

He further commented, "This tells me there is huge scope for realigning government spending priorities and making sure we're making adequate investments in roads, in ports, in bridges to ensure that—", and I am paraphrasing, he said economies like that of Montreal function well. If we lost the bridge in Montreal, what would that do to the economy of that community and the economy of our country? It cannot be allowed to happen.

There are other things that he went on to talk about, such as social infrastructure. Again, he was commenting on the facing of an aging population. We would like to see more Canadians working, and he stressed more women and aboriginals working.

There are programs such as childcare that we could put in place to allow more women to go back to work and improve our labour force participation and make sure companies have the workers they need.

Another presenter at committee was Marc Lavoie. He is a professor with the department of economics at the University of Ottawa. To paraphrase, he said that the Canadian government already in his opinion should abandon this goal of balancing the budget that has been set for 2014-15. It should give up its budget cuts already announced. It must establish a new stimulus package on infrastructure.

We need to put what is being proposed into perspective. The government is proposing to cut services in this country that Canadians need. It is proposing to take some of the workers who work for the government in various programs and put them on the street. We should find a way to move forward.

I know we have great debates in this place over taxes. I keep hearing commentary from the other side stating that the NDP wants to raise taxes. The corporate tax rate in this country in 2000 was 38% and the American rate was 36%. The finance minister to the previous prime minister lowered the Canadian tax rate to 20%, right in the middle of the G20. It was a more than reasonable move, but it took billions of dollars out of the economy, billions of dollars out of this place that we could have used to help Canadians.

What did the present Conservative government do? It took that corporate tax rate of 20%, which was already well below the American 36% rate, and dropped it to 15%. It is on its way to 15%. That takes \$16 billion a year out of the government's ability to do things for Canadians in this time of crisis. We had a report of a \$12 billion deficit a year ago. Is it not interesting how that matched up very closely with the changes that the government had made? This was a planned deficit that was put in place by the Conservative government.

I recall a minister of education in the government of Ontario talking about causing a crisis in education so the government could address it. We have a government here that has not caused the economic crisis, but it is not responding to it properly. It is exacerbating the crisis and making it much worse than it needs to be.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech.

I liked what he said about investing in infrastructure, which is strongly linked to the economy and the unemployment rate. For example, this summer when I met the mayors in my riding, the mayor of Saint-Mathias-sur-Richelieu, a bedroom community, told me there was a lot of vandalism in his community and that the young people were causing a lot of problems. It is a very small municipality and does not have the necessary resources to build recreational centres and arenas. Thus, the young people start to get involved in criminal activity and that is a big problem.

By investing in infrastructure, we can help these young people become great contributors to our society. I would like my colleague to elaborate on that.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston: Madam Speaker, one of the things that happens in any society when we have a high level of poverty is that we have people who have a certain sense of desperation, other people who are malicious in what they do. However, with that sense of not having self-esteem that comes from that, we will find that a lot of young people get involved with drugs, alcohol and other substance abuses. Many commit minor offences. That is their way of pushing back at society. The only way to fight that is to give them reasons to remain in school. We have to give them an opportunity that they can turn to and understand that they are going to have a chance for a decent life.

In order to do that, we need the full participation of the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. There has to be a strategic plan to create jobs, especially for young people.

Business of Supply

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech, particularly his comments on seniors' poverty.

I am going to take a slightly different tack. The highest living standards will be generated by a strong growth rate and a healthy environment. The most vibrant economies will be the cleanest, energy efficient and resource efficient. Transition is happening around the world. Economic prosperity and environmental responsibility should be mutually reinforcing. Going forward, I think the government should develop a green economic and job strategy to create a more environmentally sustainable economy.

I wonder what specific measures the hon. member might include, greening energy supply, industry, transportation and waste, and what measures the hon. member would suggest for tracking new jobs.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Madam Speaker, very clearly, a first step for this country would have been to implement Bill C-311 on the environment. We had the opportunity as a Canadian group of politicians to be a leader in the world and that was defeated, as I recall, in the Senate. I think that would have been an amazing step, and that was originally sponsored by the late Jack Layton who spent a lifetime involved with the environment.

As well, we talked about the revitalization of buildings across our country, the variety of things we could be doing to put people to work. People could start off at a lower level in construction trades by refitting homes and learn the skills necessary to progress in a trade so that project, which we estimated at \$2 billion, over time would have created a situation where homes were properly protected from the environment, heating and cooling loss, and all of those things, and at the same time train people and supply some hope for them.

This was a comprehensive question that requires a lot more time than I have to answer it.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to this very important topic. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the opposition motion on pension and retirement income issues. As we know, our government's top priority remains jobs and the economy. Certainly, this is a priority for many retirees and retirement savers.

Today, I would like to speak to what our Conservative government has accomplished in the area of retirement income security. However, before getting into the details, I will touch on what our government has done for the overall economy.

Business of Supply

In 2008 Canada was faced with the worst global recession since the 1930s. Our government acted quickly and decisively. Through Canada's economic action plan, we delivered extraordinary support for jobs and growth during a turbulent global economic period, and it worked. With the creation of almost 600,000 net new jobs since July 2009, Canada has more than recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession. It has posted the strongest employment growth among the G7 countries.

Canada has also maintained the best fiscal position among the G7 with the lowest net debt and among the lowest deficits in the G7 as well. Even better, the IMF and the OECD both project Canada to be among the strongest in growth in the G7 and, for the fourth straight year, the World Economic Forum rated our banking system the world's best. Undoubtedly, Canada has an enviable position relative to our G7 counterparts.

Along with our strong fiscal position, solid financial system, and our low tax approach to encourage investment, we are helping to ensure that Canada is well positioned to address any challenge ahead.

As prosperity ties into savings and ultimately retirement, I will move from the topic of overall economy and back to pensions. In so doing, let me begin by saying that our government shares the deep-rooted concerns of many Canadians about their retirement security. We understand the importance of a secure and dignified retirement, especially after a lifetime spent building a better Canada through hard work.

For that reason we have been aggressively working and focusing on improving our retirement income system. Indeed, we have already taken major action to strengthen Canada's retirement income system.

What have we done? First, in recognition of their life-long contributions to the country and our government's core belief that Canadians should keep more of their hard-earned tax money, we dramatically lowered the federal tax bill for seniors and pensioners.

Since forming government in 2006, our enviable record includes more than \$2.3 billion in annual targeted tax relief such as increasing the age credit amount by \$2,000; doubling the amount of income eligibility for pension income credit; and increasing the age limit for maturing pensions and registered retirement savings plans to 71.

We have introduced the tax free savings account, particularly beneficial to seniors as it helps them meet their ongoing savings needs on a tax efficient basis after they are no longer able to contribute to an RRSP.

Jonathan Chevreau, a noted financial commentator, has declared, "TFSA is also a welcome tax shelter for Canadian seniors". On pension income splitting for 2007 and subsequent taxation years, Jamie Golombek, a financial commentator, has noted that, "Pension splitting is probably one of the biggest tax changes in decades, in terms of the amount of tax savings this can mean for pensioners".

Furthermore, our record also includes important improvements to several specific retirement income supports. We have dramatically increased the amount working seniors can earn before facing a

clawback under their guaranteed income supplement, GIS, allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned money.

We have enhanced the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old age security and GIS, and may therefore be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit of up to \$600 annually for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This measure will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

• (1805)

Finally, we increased flexibility for seniors and older workers with federally regulated pension assets that are held in life income funds.

Second, we took major steps to reform the legislative and regulatory framework respecting federally regulated private pension plans. Indeed, these steps represented the most significant reforms in nearly 25 years.

Announced in October 2009 after extensive cross-county and online public consultations held in the months beforehand, the reforms include enhancing protections for plan members, allowing sponsors to better manage their funding obligations, making it easier for participants to negotiate changes to their pension arrangements, improving the framework for defined contribution and negotiated contribution plans, and modernizing the investment rules.

These key reforms are warmly applauded across Canada. A diverse and broad group of public interest groups ranging through the National Association of Federal Retirees; the Association of Canadian Pension Management; the Canadian Institute of Actuaries; CARP, Canada's association for the 50-plus; the Common Front for Retirement Security; the Bell Pensioners Group; the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association; and even the Canadian Labour Congress welcomed and expressed their pleasure with it.

A *Globe and Mail* editorial heralded the reforms as a good step. John Manley, a former Liberal Party of Canada member of Parliament, finance minister and deputy prime minister of Canada, declared them significant reforms that will enhance protection for plan members.

However, those reforms to federally regulated private pension plans were only one step in a much larger process. This leads to the third and final area of our focus on improving retirement security and pensions in Canada, wherein we are working with our provincial and territorial partners.

While many Canadians may not realize it, the vast majority of pension plans, approximately 90% in Canada, are provincially regulated. In other words, the federal government only has the constitutional authority to make laws related to the private pension plans of federally regulated employers, such as airlines, chartered banks and others, which employ fewer one than one in ten of all workers in Canada.

That is why, to address larger pan-Canadian concerns about pensions, we have been examining the relevant issues with our provincial and territorial counterparts in a co-operative and constructive manner.

We have demonstrated this by establishing a joint research working group on retirement income adequacy and by holding numerous federal-provincial-territorial summits on the issue.

We also fundamentally believe that the Canadian public had a fundamental right to be involved in and at the centre of this debate. That is why we have ensured that Canadians from coast to coast to coast have had the opportunity to have their voices heard in person and online.

From March to May 2010, we invited public input through round table discussions, expert conferences, online consultations and public town hall meetings to gather feedback directly from Canadians.

Even labour organizations like CUPE, typically not supporters of our government, were forced to begrudgingly admit we had conducted a serious public policy discussion.

Following these extensive and necessary consultations, the findings strongly suggested we explore opportunities to build further on the strength of Canada's retirement income system. As a result, we agreed, along with the provincial and territorial governments, to explore a set of innovative improvements.

Indeed, it is one of those innovative improvements I would like to talk about for the remainder of my speech: pooled registered pension plans.

These pooled registered pension plans, PRPPs, available to employers, employees and the self-employed, will provide Canadians with a new low-cost accessible vehicle to meet their retirement objectives.

Once implemented, PRPPs will play a critical role in improving the retirement options available to Canadians, providing a low retirement savings option. Indeed, PRPPs will be a new savings option for the millions of Canadians who have never had a private pension before.

●(1810)

As Rob Brown, a former professor at the University of Waterloo and past president of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries recently stated, "Pooled Retirement Pension Plans could be a big step towards the redesigning the retirement income security systems required for Canadians for the 21st century. Pooled Retirement Pension Plans are a good idea; one clearly worthy of pursuing. Furthermore, PRPPs will be especially important to small businesses and their employees who will now have access to a low-cost private pension plan for the very first time. As many small business employees and employers will pool their pensions, a lower management cost will be achieved, meaning many new savers and Canadians will be buying retirement savings in bulk".

As a small business owner Ingrid Laderach Steven from Toronto Swiss-Master Chocolatier knows firsthand, after meeting with the

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Minister of State for Finance about PRPPs, and here is what she had to say—

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I must interrupt the hon. member. It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings.

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the question is deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded. The vote stands deferred until Monday, October 3, 2011, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

●(1815)

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I move we see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House again today to give more clarification on the question that I asked in this House on June 21. This question involves the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program, which in fact is a rationalization program.

I would be one of the members in this House who has pushed harder for rationalization in the fishery than probably anybody else in this House. It is so important, and it is so important for the government to carry through after the rationalization program is put in place.

The rationalization program is able to take licences and people out of the fishery who need to come out of the fishery because of the stock issue. What it does is allow people to retire and to pay bills and live a decent life. It also leaves the people in the fishery who wish to make a living in the fishery with an opportunity to make a proper living, so rationalization is indeed a very important issue.

With regard to the groundfish issue, 2,300 fishermen applied for this program. However, 752 fishermen had to take the government to court in 2006 in order to be dealt with fairly.

The court made its decision a few weeks ago. It indicated that Canada Revenue Agency had to review the files again, which in fact meant that the government must settle with the fishermen.

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The only thing that I want to make sure of and to stress to the parliamentary secretary and to the government is that the government must settle in an appropriate manner. We have to ensure that everybody in the fishery is treated fairly. There have been some payments made. We have to make sure that the payments that have been made will be the same as the payments that will be made very shortly when they deal with those fishermen.

There are approximately another 1,400 fishermen out there who were not involved in this court case, and these fishermen deserve fair treatment from the government. These 1,400 fishermen worked hard to make a living and worked with the 2,300 fishermen to put a rationalization or, as they call it, an Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program in place. All that I ask the government to do is ensure that it settles with the 750 fishermen in the same way that it settled in the previous settlement and that the 1,400 fishermen who have not been dealt with fairly are dealt with fairly. In the future, when we put a rationalization in place and the licence for the fishermen belongs to the Government of Canada, we must remember that the fishermen invest a lot of dollars—their lives, in fact—into the fishery. When it becomes impossible to make a living and the government has issued the licence, it is the responsibility of the Government of Canada to pay these fishermen a decent payout so that they are able to retire in a decent way and so that the stocks will survive without this type of program right across the country.

In the area that I represent, the lobster fishery is very important. There has been a small rationalization program put in place, but more dollars are needed for these types of rationalization or payment programs. The government must commit to paying the people who have been involved previously properly. I do not mean the 750 who went to court and fought the battle and won; there are now 1,400 fishermen who need to be treated properly without going—

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Madam Speaker, I must first say that the Canada Revenue Agency must safeguard the confidential information it receives according to the confidentiality provisions of the Income Tax Act. Therefore, we cannot comment on any specific cases.

Since the inception of the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program, the matter before us today has received considerable attention by the CRA. The application of the Income Tax Act to these types of payments is a matter of some complexity and disputes.

In general, when a taxpayer disagrees with an assessment, the act provides objections and appeal rights that must be exercised in the manner and within the time frame specified in the act. If a taxpayer fails to exercise his or her objection or appeal right, he or she may choose to request consideration under the taxpayer relief provisions, which are also contained in the Income Tax Act. The court also provide Canadians with an independent review of disputed issues and serves to clarify the law or resolve differences of opinions with the CRA.

The matter considered by the Federal Court was whether the fishers, who had not disputed the tax treatment of the compensation amounts through the objection and appeal process, could benefit from the same tax treatment accorded to the other fishers who had disputed CRA's position.

On May 16, 2011, the Federal Court directed the CRA to reconsider these fishers' requests.

As the minister informed the House on June 21, 2011, "the government will not appeal this decision, and CRA will now reconsider the fishers' claim as requested by the Federal Court".

The CRA has now reconsidered the fishers' requests and concluded that exceptional circumstances exist to allow a re-examination of the income tax returns of the 752 affected fishers.

The CRA will now review the fishers' income tax returns for the 1999, 2000 and 2001 tax years on a case-by-case basis and this will start October 2011. The CRA will notify each fisher of its decision in due time.

Our government has the absolute expectation that the CRA administers Canadian tax law in a manner that is fair and consistent for all.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's response, but it is often important to remember that when a program is put in place, everybody must be treated the same way.

A number of fishers have been paid. Some 750 people went to court and won their case, but 1,400 more fishermen have not been considered at all. These people work hard and invest a lot of dollars in the fishery. The licence is the property of the Government of Canada. There was a rationalization program. All I would ask is that all people be treated fairly and that all people be treated the same by Canada Revenue Agency.

My hon. colleague has indicated that the Canada Revenue Agency will deal with them in a fair manner. In my opinion, a fair manner is treating every fisher the same.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, while I appreciate the member opposite finally expressing an interest in this file, I would note that it comes about a decade later than it should have.

I would also remind hon. members and the fishers affected that the hon. member for Cardigan actually sat at the cabinet table where the decisions affecting the fishers, who we are discussing today, were first made. The vast majority of these cases date back from 1998 to 2001.

If the member, indeed, feels so strongly about this file, why was he a partner at the cabinet table and why did he participate in the policy that was brought forward, which he now, all of a sudden, criticizes?

Fishers work hard. Our government has the absolute expectation that CRA administers Canadian tax law in a manner that is fair and consistent for all.

● (1825)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise again in discussion with my hon. colleagues on the other side of the House on a question I asked in June.

As we start off, let us look at a report by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada in July of this year, which reported that total household debt in Canada had hit \$1.5 trillion. On September 13, Statistics Canada reported that household credit market debt rose to 149% of disposable income in the second quarter. At the same time, due to falling share prices and pension assets, average household net worth fell by 0.3%.

Canadians are feeling squeezed in every direction. As savings disappear, credit becomes both more important to families and more dangerous, both to individuals and to the economy as a whole. Because of this we need comprehensive legislation designed to protect Canadians from the predatory practices of credit card companies and some banks.

Far too many Canadians sign up for credit cards with low introductory rates, only to see their rates soar once the period ends. Too many students and low-income Canadians are aggressively pursued by credit card issuers and end up taking on debt that they are realistically unable to repay. Far too many Canadians are charged excessive fees and penalties for paying their balance a few days late or a few dollars short.

It is not only consumers who are being gouged by credit card companies and some of the banks. On the first anniversary of the government's voluntary code of conduct, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business published a report card on the voluntary code. Its findings were that small-business margins were being eroded by credit card merchant fees. In fact, the Competition Bureau has already ruled that Visa and MasterCard's "honour-all-cards rule", which forces small businesses to accept higher cost premium cards, is anti-competitive.

It is time for the government to act to protect consumers, to protect small businesses and to protect the Canadian economy.

Just this Tuesday, the finance committee heard from a senior private sector economist who pointed out the precarious situation of our economy. Douglas Porter, deputy chief economist at BMO Nesbitt Burns, said that there was a 35% chance of Canada entering a recession in the next year. We need to ensure that the government acts now to ensure that consumers are protected in case the worst happens. The government's wait and see approach is fundamentally flawed. It is better to treat the cause now than to apply a band-aid once it is too late.

In April 2009 the 40th Parliament adopted my motion for the government to introduce comprehensive credit card legislation to protect consumers. The problems facing the global economy may be different today, but this issue continues to affect Canadian consumers and small businesses.

When will the government recognize this and make the legislative changes required to continue to protect consumers and small businesses?

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Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, in response to my colleague, who is a fellow motorcycle enthusiast, I take issue with the fact that my colleague's party voted against a number of measures that our government has put forward to address this issue.

The Conservative government is clearly committed to helping protect Canadian consumers especially with regard to financial products like credit cards. We have demonstrated that through the numerous landmark actions we have taken in recent years to protect consumers. Again, these are actions that the NDP voted against.

We believe Canadians should not need a magnifying glass and a dictionary to read their credit card statements or applications. We also believe that they should not have to be lawyers or economists to understand them.

That is why our Conservative government has forced greater clarity and more timely disclosure from credit card issuers when dealing with consumers. It has put into place actions such as the new landmark rules that ensure Canadian consumers now have fair and transparent information and rules for credit cards with new regulations.

I will cite some of those rules.

Summary boxes on contracts and applications will help improve disclosure to consumers by clearly stating key features such as interest rates and fees.

There are clearer implications of minimum payments by improving consumer awareness of the time it would take to fully repay loans if only the minimum payment is made each month.

Timely advanced disclosure of interest rate changes will protect consumers from sudden and poorly disclosed interest rate hikes.

There is a minimum 21 day grace period. All new purchases made within that period shall remain interest free if the consumer pays his or her balance in full by the due date.

There are lower interest costs with mandatory allocations of favoured consumer payments.

There is express consent for credit limit increases.

There are limits on debt collection practices.

There is the prohibition of over-the-limit fees by restricting fees caused by merchant holds placed on credit cards thereby protecting consumers from inadvertent fees for which they are not responsible nor aware of.

These are rules that the Conservative government worked on. Unfortunately, once again the NDP voted against them.

When Canadians make the choice to use a credit card they are not signing away all of their rights. Our new consumer-friendly rules will empower Canadians by making it easier for them to shop around for the credit card best suited to their needs without fearing that they might be taken advantage of later.

Adjournment Proceedings

Indeed these new regulations were well received by Canadians and consumer groups. In the words of the Consumers Association of Canada, "All of the things that the finance minister has done are actually just what we asked for overall. I've got to congratulate him".

It boggles my mind to understand why the member stands today to pretend he supports these measures when he and his party in fact voted against them.

However, our Conservative government knows there is always more it can do to protect consumers. We have already acted in that respect. Indeed we have recently announced measures to prohibit negative option billing and reduce cheque holding periods while providing timelier access to funds. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against those too.

Why will the member not do the right thing by supporting the consumer protection measures we have taken and forget this nonsense about being committed? He should be standing in the House and voting for these measures to protect consumers when we put them forward.

● (1830)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague and I are avid motorcyclists. Perhaps we should go for a ride and have this conversation because we are obviously not seeing the same side of this consumer debate.

When we were bringing this issue forward we applauded the Conservative government for what it had brought forward on some of the issues relating to it. Having bigger fonts on a credit card bill though does not help people at the end of the month.

We are calling for stricter guidelines and regulations with regard to credit card companies and banks to ensure that at the end of the month the consumers who have used their cards actually understand what their bills are about. The bigger font helps in doing that. For example, if someone has a \$1,000 credit card limit and he or she makes a payment of \$800 on that card, that person is not expecting to pay interest on the portion of the debt that was paid off. However, what credit card companies are doing is stating in the fine print of the credit card contract that interest is to be paid on the full amount.

There are many things that we can do. I think this is—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, as my colleague indicated, our government did take action to make sure they can read those applications properly, and yet the member still refers to the applications as if they have some small print. That has been legislated away.

The member is not understanding what it is he voted against. He ought to have voted for it because it sounds as though he wants to better protect consumers, which is exactly what this Conservative government is doing.

In fact in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we are taking even more action to protect consumers of financial sector products. In particular, we are further enhancing consumer protection by banning unsolicited credit card cheques and also developing measures to enhance the consumer protection framework related to prepaid cards. These are positive measures that are well received.

Rob Carrick, the well-respected *Globe and Mail* personal finance columnist, applauded them saying:

[Unsolicited credit card cheques] are insidious because they appear to be an alternative way to use your credit card to pay for something. In reality they are a much worse option.

Yet again—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

● (1835)

[Translation]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:35 p.m.)

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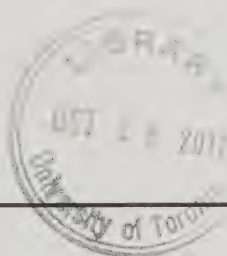
House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, September 30, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 30, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The House resumed from September 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was asked to speak this morning regarding Bill C-4, which would prevent human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system. I am pleased to rise this morning to say how much I strongly oppose this bill.

I will start by saying that this bill makes it even more clear that we have a repressive, backwards and irresponsible government that is severely lacking in humanity. I must say that this is not very surprising to me, as this bill is simply one more example, among many others. Once again, the government wants to make a disadvantaged segment of the population suffer, for unknown reasons, instead of lending these people a hand at a time when they need it most.

I am strongly opposed to this bill because every day, in my riding, refugees and immigrants come to us for help. They ask for only one thing: to live in this country with dignity; to have a second chance. With this bill, they will not get that second chance. This bill authorizes an officer or the minister to refuse to consider applications for permanent residence. How can we grant this power to an individual when the applicant may be in danger? What criteria will the officer or the minister use? Will they refuse applications based on how they are feeling that day? This bill would give them the power to do so.

I do not think that the government understands that being in power means making decisions for the well-being of the entire population, by consulting the people and listening to their needs and by avoiding

randomly and unfairly punishing people who are simply seeking refuge. Being in power does not mean authorizing oneself to single-handedly make a decision that could have a huge impact on the lives of several people or even several families. This bill would require some individuals to report to an immigration officer and to respond to all of his questions for no real reason. That is discrimination, pure and simple.

How can we convince people to establish themselves here if we treat them as detainees as soon as they arrive, without knowing the full story, and without even knowing why they chose Canada? Under this bill, claimants, including children, will automatically be detained when they arrive or at the moment they are designated. How can the government violate international rules that were created for the well-being of all communities? This would leave the door open for indefinite or arbitrary detentions. Where are we headed? Where is our country headed? It is a great place to live, a place where immigrants are welcome and where we extend a helping hand to refugees so that they can see a bit of light at the end of the tunnel.

Under this bill, a designated person cannot apply for permanent residency for five years. Five years. Then, if the person breaches any of the conditions imposed, this period can be extended by five or six years. A person could wait more than five years to see their family members who remained overseas. In addition, designated persons are prohibited from leaving the country until they receive permanent resident status. Not only are they kept from bringing their families to Canada, but they are also prohibited from going to visit them. What has happened to the family values that we have always defended here? Can someone tell me? Does the government have this little respect for the family unit, the first community where a human being grows and flourishes? The minister must not know what it is like to be separated from loved ones for five years; otherwise, he would not be trying to impose such rules.

This bill would punish refugees or those trying to help them instead of punishing the criminals—the smugglers and traffickers. This proposed refugee process is arbitrary and completely discriminatory.

Government Orders

A few months ago, Parliament passed balanced legislation concerning refugees. It would make a lot more sense to simply enforce that legislation better, instead of treating these people like criminals, when they simply need a helping hand. Furthermore, in Australia, similar laws met with opposition from Amnesty International, which started a campaign to condemn the misinformation surrounding refugees who arrive by boat. This government is alienating the international community and severely damaging our reputation. We have a responsibility towards refugees. We do not have the right to treat them this way.

• (1010)

We in the NDP recognize this responsibility, unlike the Conservatives, who want to evade it. This approach flies in the face of our country's commitments under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is not the right legislation to put an end to human trafficking.

Do we want to be recognized as the country where refugees are discriminated against? Where no one wants to go and settle for fear of being detained and treated like a criminal? Where people, if they choose to live here, risk having to go without seeing their loved ones for over five years?

We are losing our values of openness, tolerance, giving, social justice and equality. Many groups strongly oppose this bill. The Canadian Council for Refugees completely rejects this bill. Amnesty International Canada said the bill would lead to serious violations of the rights of refugees. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association says these measures are simply not necessary. Why would we apply measures that are not necessary? The Canadian Bar Association says that this bill violates Canada's international obligations regarding the treatment of persons seeking protection. As I was saying earlier, we have a responsibility to refugees and the government is refusing to treat refugees fairly.

A group of experts from the Centre for Refugee Studies has described this bill as draconian. I think these groups know what they are talking about. Earlier I was saying that we need to listen to the concerns of the people. Here we have flagrant examples of a government doing exactly the opposite. This bill could violate a number of legal provisions, including those pertaining to equality before the law and arbitrary detention. Bill C-4 is contrary to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

As I was saying earlier, we are tarnishing our international reputation and that is serious.

I will say again: I am strongly opposed to this bill because we have a responsibility to refugees. The government does not have all the rights. No. It would be a serious mistake to ignore these responsibilities in the name of security, especially when we consider that this bill will not in any way—not in any way—stop human trafficking.

I welcome any questions my colleagues might have.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her very passionate and clear speech on the issues in this bill.

My colleague mentioned that a number of organizations are opposed to the bill because it infringes on the rights of refugees. It is well known that my parents came from Vietnam, and many Vietnamese people have arrived by boat. Could my colleague talk about the repercussions of this bill for refugees who seek asylum in Canada?

• (1015)

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Some refugees who arrive by boat already need someone to lend a hand, they need help, and they need to see the light at the end of the tunnel. These people will arrive here and be detained, even the children.

It is very traumatic psychologically for a child to be detained for no real reason upon his arrival. I also believe that refugees who arrive here will not be guilty of any crimes. They will not have done any human trafficking or anything wrong. They are certainly not smugglers. They will arrive here looking for help and hoping for a second chance, but they will not get it. I believe they will want to go elsewhere, and with just cause.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite described the government members in the House as repressive and deeply lacking in humanity.

Rather than hurl insults at hon. members in the House, perhaps she could tell us what she would say to the families across the country who want to keep their streets, families and communities safe and free from danger.

I remind the member that the bill is called the “Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act”.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my colleague for the question.

As I was saying, my aim was not to insult members of the government party or anyone else. I merely wanted to present the facts, as these are the facts. I do not believe that we can jeopardize the rights of refugees in the name of security. As I was saying as well, this bill will in no way prevent human trafficking, and thus does not provide a solution to that problem. The solution is to enforce the existing law on human trafficking. That is the solution we need here.

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot just explained very clearly, Bill C-4 is very restrictive, particularly when it comes to privileges and to the image that Canada has traditionally portrayed to other countries of the world.

I am somewhat troubled when I try to understand why the Conservative members want to once again introduce this bill and ignore the amendments that we, the members of the NDP and the members of the Liberal Party, are proposing. It is important to note the direct impacts of passing such a bill, such as the violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the violation of international treaties. I have difficulty imagining how anyone would want to pass this omnibus bill, which was already debated in the previous parliament as Bill C-49, if I am not mistaken. Many debates were held, many witnesses were heard and many facts were put on the table in this regard. The bill was not passed. However, the Conservatives are once again trying to pass this odious bill.

This is even more surprising since Canada will find itself in a difficult position with regard to international treaties if, in the end, this bill is passed as is. The government just wants to do what Australia did and it is very difficult to understand those objectives.

On top of all this, it is very worrisome to see that there will be fairly serious consequences if immigration officers are given more power. Many rights and liberties will be violated. One major problem involves the discrimination that people who are deemed to be designated claimants will face. They will not have any rights. What is even more worrisome is that these people will basically be put in prison for at least a year. This completely violates the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The New Democratic caucus therefore has serious concerns about passing this bill, as introduced by the Conservatives. We stand firm. We want this bill to be amended and we want it to give some reprieve to ensure that everyone in need—everyone who is a true refugee—is treated equally. It is important to remember that our proposals are in no way meant to be weak or condescending toward criminals or those who, for political purposes, use certain methods of transportation to transport refugees. In my opinion, immigration officers are trained and are capable of determining and knowing who the real bad guys are. The problem with this bill is that, in reality, we are lumping everyone into the same category.

• (1020)

And that is not acceptable.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech on the problems that exist in Bill C-4. He said that certain aspects of the bill are contrary to the law. This bill flies in the face of international conventions and the rights guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this, and I would also like him to explain the consequences this bill would have on Canada's international reputation.

Mr. José Nunez-Melo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Everyone here has heard all about these unacceptable violations, specifically the violations of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When the charter was created, Canada gained respect in the eyes of the world and all the nations around the globe. Canada set an example and many countries have drawn inspiration from it. But everyone should be questioning the true objectives of this bill, as it now stands, because it violates every international convention, specifically those related to children. Putting children in jail is

unbelievable; it is unheard of, the world over. Even countries ruled by dictators would not be able to propose a similar bill.

• (1025)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his response.

Could he also explain the impact this bill might have on Canada's reputation? He spoke about the fact that this bill is an attack on children's rights. The government says that this bill targets smugglers—that is what is written in the title—but the hon. member raised the point that it will also attack the rights of refugees. Could the hon. member speak about the impact this bill will have on the rights of refugees and on Canada's international reputation?

Mr. José Nunez-Melo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

The topic of children is one that affects us all. Long ago, the ancestors of our wonderful nation of Canada built a reasonable immigration system, able to support the productive force and workers. The children of some immigrants integrate better than their parents. If the bill is implemented as it stands now, there will be some serious and unfortunately very restrictive consequences for the intellectual and physical development of the children.

The hon. members from the Conservative Party should agree to the amendments proposed by the Liberal and NDP caucuses, to ensure that we are treating children humanely and that the bill targets human smugglers more directly.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 attacks refugees. It has no place in Canada because it proposes measures that are completely unacceptable. Some provisions of the bill respect neither the charter nor Canada's international human rights obligations. It is a discriminatory bill because it penalizes refugees for their method of arrival. It reintroduces provisions from Bill C-49 from the previous parliament, which was widely condemned by the community across the country.

This bill was previously rejected by all the opposition parties in Parliament. Many legal experts have said that it violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international law. The government is telling us that it wants to target the smugglers, but is it really necessary to risk our reputation within the international community? Is it really necessary to violate the constitutional and international rights of refugees? We deplore the reintroduction of the anti-refugee legislation.

This bill allows the minister to order the detention not only of the asylum seekers, but also of their children, even if our security is not at risk and the detainees are not a threat. The bill allows the minister to order the detention and imprisonment of persons seeking refugee status.

Government Orders

It is a government's duty to take responsible measures to deter human trafficking. It is Canada's duty to take clear and transparent measures to put an end to dangerous and abusive behaviour. We must take measures to end the behaviour of criminals, in other words, smugglers, who violate the rights of refugees and the vulnerable. We agree with putting an end to all that, but Bill C-4 targets the refugees and not the smugglers.

Canada is committed to protecting refugees and implementing measures that respect the rights of refugees and immigrants. But now we are increasing the burdens on our refugees. With regard to the former version of this bill, Alex Neve, of Amnesty International, recently said:

Bill C-49 does not get it right in drawing the line between tackling crime and upholding rights. It goes after smugglers, in large part, by punishing the individuals who turn to them—in desperation—for assistance. Those provisions of the Bill that are discriminatory and will lead to human rights violations must be withdrawn.

I believe Mr. Neve is still right.

The bill creates a second class of refugees. Even people whose refugee status has been confirmed cannot obtain travel documents or file an application for permanent residence for five years. These provisions also violate the international convention, which requires countries to issue travel documents.

The bill will result in indefinite detentions, and a designated person will not be able to submit an application for permanent residence until five years have elapsed. Why such a long time? This measure applies even if the person's refugee status in Canada is confirmed. This bill will prevent refugees who have been duly accepted from being reunited with their families and spouses. It will certainly not help the integration of refugees into our society. This bill seems very difficult to justify.

• (1030)

In addition, as long as designated claimants do not have permanent resident status, they will be deprived of the right to travel outside the country. This provision of the bill appears to violate article 28 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The bill contains discriminatory provisions. Designated claimants cannot appeal decisions regarding their claims to the Refugee Appeal Division. Since when does Canada fail to abide by its international commitments? Since when does Canada deny the right of appeal?

We have to wonder. Why do the provisions of this bill appear to violate the provisions of refugee conventions and even those of the charter? The bill imposes mandatory imprisonment on groups of refugee claimants, including children, despite the fact that these same individuals have not given us any reason to believe that they represent any sort of danger or threat. The minister will even have the power to decide to imprison any refugee claimant upon arrival if there is even the slightest suspicion of smuggling. The minister will also have the right to imprison refugee claimants simply because their identity cannot be established in a timely manner.

As hon. members know, refugees are often fleeing a war zone, a place where circumstances are less than ideal. It is difficult to justify placing additional burdens on these people. It seems as though the legislation even violates the international Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which prohibits the imposition of penalties on

refugees fleeing persecution on account of their illegal entry. Human smuggling is a serious problem. Resources and co-operation with foreign governments are required to deal with smugglers. However, human smuggling does not justify the violation of constitutional and international rights.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association wrote to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to express its concerns about this bill. The president of the Canadian Council for Refugees, Wanda Yamamoto, has said, "We are celebrating this year the 60th anniversary of the refugee convention, but instead of honouring this treaty, the government is proposing to violate it." She went on to say, "Let us not forget that the convention was adopted because many countries, including Canada, had closed their doors on Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis, and we said 'Never again!'".

I completely agree with her. After the second world war, the international community went through a period of reflection. Together, we decided that we never wanted to violate refugees' rights ever again. The ship filled with Jewish refugees that had travelled around the world was denied entry to Canada and many other countries. They were forced to return to Germany and in the end, suffered the same fate as so many of their fellow Jewish citizens under the Nazi regime: they were killed.

The measures being proposed here today will mean that people who want to come to Canada, which has been an internationally-recognized safe haven, will no longer believe that to be true. Where will these people go? Will they be forced to stay in their country? Passing this legislation could lead them to their deaths. Is that not disturbing? It seems very clear that the bill currently before us does very little to deter smugglers. One has to wonder why the government is so intent on attacking refugees and their children. The government must know that we already have legislation to deal with smugglers and traffickers. They already face life imprisonment and fines up to \$1 million.

If the Conservatives want to discuss the existing deterrent effect, let us talk about it. Why are they so intent on attacking refugees? Our commitments mean that we cannot harm them gratuitously. Bill C-4 punishes refugees.

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with some interest to several speeches by our NDP colleagues today. A few moments ago, one of them said this bill was repressive, backward and oppressive, referring to the government that way. This member now claims that we would be oppressing refugees by this bill. He brought up the issue of the *St. Louis* and the tragedy of the Jewish refugees fleeing Hamburg who came to our coast and were turned back.

I have actually met some of those survivors, there were a few. I can assure members that none of them would be seeking to go back for a vacation in the land they had supposedly fled. Refugees are not refugees because a smuggler says they are. We have the ability to determine genuine refugee status in this country.

Government Orders

This bill would crack down on the smugglers. It would actually bring some accountability and increase our ability to prosecute smugglers, mandatory minimum prison sentences for convicted smugglers, and it would hold the shipowners to account. It would provide for a maximum of one year of detention, so that legitimate refugee status could be determined by our very generous provisions in our country. Refugees are very well looked after in this country. It would prevent abuse of our system and, frankly, it would ensure that health benefits of refugees do not exceed those of Canadians themselves who support these—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, the health of our newcomers is certainly topmost in our interest. We certainly want to ensure that all people who come to Canada are welcomed. In large measure I agree with him that when somebody comes to this country, we need to treat them well. We need to give them access to health care. We certainly do not need to imprison them. I do not think that sending the refugee to prison would in any way stop the smuggler from trying to make a profit off of people's misery.

• (1040)

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I see the government lacking vision and even effort.

Being a father myself, I do not understand what I am supposed to tell my son when I see this happen. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is supposed to be for everybody in this land. Yet, again, with a lack of effort, the legislation that is being brought forward is very broad and does not attach itself to specifics. There is exclusion.

[Translation]

The roots of this country have touched the soil of every nation on the planet and everyone should be welcome here. We should not be resorting to repression. The charter is far-reaching, and we send our military around the world to say that this charter must exist. We encourage democracy and yet, here at home, we are starting to exclude people.

Perhaps the hon. member has a comment to add about this.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member.

The rights bestowed on us by the Canadian charter are clearly rights that we value. They are upheld by the Supreme Court and they belong to us all. We cannot deny the rights of refugees just because we think that we will control smugglers by targeting refugees. That is backwards. It is the opposite of what we should be doing.

To get to the root of Canada's smuggling problem, we need to target smugglers. The bill before us does not seem to do that. Instead, it targets refugees who already bear a heavy burden. Constitutional rights exist in Canada. I have a hard time seeing how the bill before us today could do anything to help control smuggling, which is a real problem. If the government wants to table a bill that actually deals with smugglers, I am completely open to discussing it. However, the fact that we are talking about targeting refugees is something quite surprising and, I feel, something that goes against our international law agreements.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to rise and speak to Bill C-4 because we need evidence-based solutions to address human smuggling. Unfortunately, this backward legislation targets legitimate refugee claimants and not the real criminals: human smugglers.

It was 60 years ago that the government expressed its solidarity with refugees by signing the 1951 refugee convention, and 2011 is a special commemorative year. The UN refugee agency is calling on the public to reaffirm its support for refugees. It is calling on governments to show humanity and respect for human rights and refugee rights.

The UN has developed the “1 is too many” campaign to strengthen global protection in this anniversary year. The “1 is too many” campaign concentrates on the central tag line: one refugee without hope is too many.

There is a portfolio of other tag lines such as: one family forced to flee is too many; one refugee without hope is too many; one refugee returned to danger is too many; one refugee longing for home is too many; one child without a nationality is too many; one family without shelter is too many; one refugee denied a safe haven is too many; one child growing up in a camp is too many; one family torn apart by war is too many; one girl raped at gun point is too many; and it goes on.

As legislators we must all ask ourselves, if our family was in danger, our lives threatened by the government that is supposed to protect us, what would we do and how would we want the world to respond?

Each one of us should remember how many of us are children or descendants of immigrants. Each one of us should consider the economic, cultural and social benefits Canada has gained by accepting immigrants and refugees to our country. We must all remember our long-standing dedication to humanitarian values and human rights.

Instead of the government reaffirming Canada's commitment to protect refugees in this anniversary year, the government is fearmongering, demonizing, and punishing refugees through its treatment of asylum seekers and through its proposed legislation.

I have the honour of representing Etobicoke North, which is one of the most diverse ridings in the country. Each week we hear from desperate families, such as: a sister trying to bring family from Africa because her brother is hiding in a bush afraid of political persecution; an uncle giving up his job and leaving family in Toronto to rescue three orphan nieces in India.

Government Orders

During the humanitarian disaster in Sri Lanka, I heard daily from my Tamil community. One man came into my constituency office and wrote down the names of 100 family members who were missing and he did not know whether they were alive or dead. Each weekend during the humanitarian crisis I met with my Tamil community for four months.

Bill C-4 was originally introduced in Parliament by the government in October 2010 as Bill C-49 and it was reintroduced in June 2011 in the new parliamentary session. If the bill is approved by Parliament, it will make significant changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, affecting the way refugee claimants are treated in Canada.

The government claims that the bill is about stopping smugglers who are bringing people illegally into Canada. However, the bill focuses on punishing the people they are smuggling, including refugees who need to get to Canada to save their lives.

All of Canada's laws must respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees basic rights. Several aspects of Bill C-4 likely do not respect the charter. For example, Bill C-4 says that designated persons are detained for one year without review.

• (1045)

The Supreme Court of Canada has recently clearly stated that detention without review for long periods is contrary to the charter. If Bill C-4 is approved by Parliament, it could be challenged in the courts and the courts would probably decide that some parts of the bill are illegal because they do not respect the charter. Unfortunately, while the courts are deciding the case, refugees would suffer in detention.

Canadian laws must also respect international human rights conventions that Canada has signed. These include the convention relating to the status of refugees and the convention on the rights of the child. Many parts of Bill C-4 do not respect one or more international conventions. If Bill C-4 is passed, Canada would therefore be failing in some of its international obligations.

The following are examples of the ways in which Bill C-4 violates human rights protected by international law.

Punishing refugees for illegal entry. The refugees convention says in article 31 that governments must not impose penalties on refugees for illegal entry. However, Bill C-4 does exactly this by punishing designated persons in various ways, including by detaining them.

With regard to arbitrary detention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says that governments must not detain anyone arbitrarily. Arbitrary detention is detention without the proper legal protections; for example, detaining people without giving them the possibility of having a review of their detention by an independent judge. Bill C-4 does exactly this by saying that designated persons must be detained without possibility of review for one year.

With regard to separation of families, various international conventions say that governments must protect the rights of families to be united but Bill C-4 does the opposite by denying designated refugees the right, for five years, to apply to reunite with their children overseas.

With regard to the best interests of the child, the Convention on the Rights of the Child says in article 3 that governments must take into consideration the best interests of any child affected by a decision. However, under Bill C-4, some children could be deported from Canada without any consideration of their best interests and application on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Bill C-4 is deeply unfair to refugees. It fails to honour obligations under Canadian and international law. It deprives individual cases from the independent review that justice requires. It would involve huge costs in unnecessary detention. Australia tried punishing refugees to deter them. It did not work.

At the same time, Bill C-4 would do nothing to prevent human smuggling. More laws would not catch the smugglers who are overseas. Mandatory minimum sentences have been shown not to work as deterrents. Smuggling, under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, is already punishable. The reality is that under Bill C-4 refugees would be victimized three times: first by their persecutors; second by the smugglers; and finally by Canada.

The reality is that most refugees want to go home but simply cannot return safely. We should admire and honour their courage and determination as they strive to pick up the pieces and start over, and we should recognize the richness and diversity they bring to Canada.

I would like to close by reminding us all that many refugees have made a difference and distinguished themselves on the world stage: actress and singer Marlene Dietrich; physicist Albert Einstein; and our own Michaëlle Jean. Finally, one refugee without schooling is too many. One refugee child behind bars is too many.

• (1050)

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her presentation. I have a couple of questions.

Basically, the bill says it is preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system act. We have a member of the government saying that this will make streets safer. What is the member's opinion regarding whether the bill will make streets safer and who will be affected by it? Is it the smugglers or the refugees?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, It is important for people to understand that the bill has been harshly criticized because of what it would do to refugees. Refugee advocates denounce the bill as an attack on refugee rights. In particular, critics say that the bill contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canada's obligation under the UN Convention on Refugees.

Janet Dench, the executive director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, says:

It is difficult to understand why the government would be proposing to bring this legislation back without change when it has been so widely condemned by legal experts, is clearly a violation of our charter and clearly in violation of international standards of human rights. There is no ambiguity about this. It does not conform to our international legal obligations.

She goes on to say:

—refugees...would be detained for up to a year, and even those accepted as refugees would be held in suspended animation for five years without any right to travel, to reunify with family or get on with their lives.

• (1055)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member agree that one of the prime responsibilities of any government is to ensure that its borders are protected and when its sovereignty is challenged, that its various agencies have the ability to protect its sovereignty?

However, for those who seek asylum in Canada, when they arrive in the fashion that the bill would seek to address, our authorities need the ability to not only take care of the health and welfare of those people on the boats, but they also need the ability to ensure they are who they say they are, that we can check on who they are and can use our international partners to ensure that nobody who should not be in Canada does not arrive here. Surely the hon. member can appreciate the need to do that.

I keep hearing the Liberals and the members of the NDP say how the bill would seek to jail asylum seekers. They seem to want it both ways. Often they talk about how great our forces are. Many of the people who came to Canada on the boat in the last round now live in my riding. They are living in hiding, in fear of the people to whom they owe money.

Is that the type of system that member wants to continue to support, or would she support a system that goes after the people who illegally bring these people to Canada and force them into a life of hiding in Canada?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that our sovereignty is not under attack.

It is important for people to understand that refugees are often classified unfairly. Refugees flee their country, not for economic gain but to escape persecution, the threat of imprisonment and even threats to their lives. They need a safe haven where they can recover from mental and physical trauma and rebuild their hopes for a better future.

Intolerance is often at the root of internal displacement and it is also present in some of the countries to which refugees flee.

It is also important to point out that the minister can designate a group as an irregular arrival, which happened, for example, with the MV *Sun Sea* that arrived in British Columbia.

However, the bill does not say that the refugee claimants must have arrived by boat in order to be designated. A group could be designated even if there were no smuggling involved. Once a group is designated, everyone in the group is punished. The bill creates two classes of refugees, with one class treated worse than the other.

Statements by Members

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to join so many voices in opposition to Bill C-4.

It is a bit of a déjà vu, having been part of the team in the last parliamentary session that stood against Bill C-49. It is interesting to note that, while all opposition parties joined to oppose that bill, we are in the new Parliament assuming, yet again, that Canadians want this kind of legislation.

As we have heard, Bill C-4 is deeply flawed. Not only is it deeply flawed, but it also goes against the very image of Canada that we have built over decades, an image that Canada is welcoming, that it is inclusive, that it is open to not only the diversity of people from around the world, but also to the diversity of people who must often escape difficult situations, whether they come from backgrounds of poverty, or racial persecution or discrimination in their countries.

Many of these trends are ones that we, as Canadians, have responded to over the years.

I see my time is up. I look forward to standing once again in opposition to Bill C-4 at a later time.

The Speaker: The hon. member will have eight and a half minutes left to conclude her remarks when the bill is next debated, but right now we will move on to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

INNOVATION CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the St. Thomas Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurs, or ICE, is a cool example of a mixed use business incubator. ICE offers clients just the right mix of counselling, mentoring, administrative support and professional location to help businesses grow and succeed.

Visiting the centre, I discussed progress with some of the business start-ups, including computer specialists, a fastener company, people with home health care expertise and a great customer service entrepreneur in the home maintenance field, sharing great ideas with me and with each other. This type of business start-up and growth interaction can only take place when under one roof.

The collaboration of local economic development agencies, the Elgin Business Resource Centre and the generous help of local sponsors have made jobs happen.

Yes, it starts with passionate people with an idea, add some expertise and mentorship, include a great location like ICE, and a perfect concoction is created: jobs, jobs, jobs.

*Statements by Members***COURAGE CANADA**

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to tell members about a remarkable and courageous young man, a constituent of mine, named Mark DeMontis.

Mark lost his eyesight at the age of 17 and his dream of playing professional hockey was darkened. Mark is currently rollerblading across Canada to raise awareness of the ability of blind kids to play hockey.

I am proud and honoured to welcome Mark and his family to Ottawa today. I invite all members to join me on the steps of Parliament Hill next Tuesday, October 4, after question period, to help send him on his remarkable journey.

This courageous young man has founded a not-for-profit organization called Courage Canada to further his goal of funding learn-to-skate programs and skills development sessions for blind youth across Canada. His ultimate goal is that blind hockey become a sport.

As long as we have young people in Canada like Mark, who are determined to succeed no matter what obstacles they face, we can all continue to have hope for the future of our country.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one week ago today, on September 23, the employees of Labatt Canada shared their company's responsible drinking philosophy with customers and consumers across the country.

This year's Be(er) Responsible Day was tied into Labatt's new program called "Take the Pledge". This program, aimed primarily at young people, appealed to all Canadians to sign a pledge that they would not drink and drive. In appreciation for taking the pledge, Labatt donated \$1 to the True Patriot Love Foundation for each pledge signed by a Canadian.

There have been far too many tragedies involving drinking and driving. I commend the thousands of employees of Labatt Canada, particularly those working in the Labatt brewery located in my riding of London—North Centre, for this initiative.

On behalf of all members of the House, I would encourage all Canadians to take the pledge to put an end to drinking and driving.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Liberal parliamentarians, I extend my warmest wishes to the people of China and to all Chinese Canadians as they celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Since former prime minister Pierre Trudeau initiated diplomatic relations with China 41 years ago, the Liberal Party has proudly cultivated the friendship between our two great countries. China is Canada's second largest trading partner and the business relationship between our countries continues to flourish.

In my riding of Vancouver Quadra I am pleased to host and attend many events where I can foster shared prosperity and stronger cultural ties between our two countries.

I send my sincerest thanks to China's ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Zhang Junsai, and Madam Yin Guomei for hosting me at their embassy celebration this week.

Liberals look forward to another successful year, working with our Chinese communities and further strengthening the warm relationship between the peoples of China and Canada.

MISSISSAUGA YOUTH GAMES

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, I will be attending the sixth annual Mississauga Youth Games, a not-for-profit organization in the city of Mississauga, which increases access to sport and fitness programs by offering youth free access to activities like baseball, cricket, dance and soccer, among many others.

Through the children's fitness tax credit, our government has proven our commitment and appreciation toward the role of sport and fitness in a child's development. With this being a priority for our government, I would like to applaud the organizing committee and volunteers of the Mississauga Youth Games.

Programs like these teach youth to become effective and engaged citizens through the promotion of sport, volunteerism, civic action and by placing an emphasis on physical wellbeing.

Organizations like the Mississauga Youth Games continue to complement our government's efforts to ensure that Canada's youth have access to sport and fitness programs.

I would like to thank the organizing committee of the Mississauga Youth Games for its dedication to sport and fitness in Mississauga.

● (1105)

[Translation]

MICHEL BERNIER

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to one of my constituents in Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Michel Bernier, who retired in July after dedicating 51 years of service to fire safety, a distinction that is unmatched in all of Quebec.

This man is very passionate about the safety of his fellow citizens. In over five decades of service, Mr. Bernier fought fires and saved many belongings and lives, and he often risked his own life in doing so.

In 1984, he was the recipient of the Governor General's Medal of Bravery. He is deeply dedicated to the fire department and to the public, and he is involved in a wide variety of activities within his community.

Mr. Bernier is seated in the public gallery today. His 51-year career within the community and the fire department is unparalleled and is worthy of the recognition of this House.

* * *

[English]

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the University of Calgary is a vibrant, comprehensive research university that produces an economic impact of \$1 billion in the Calgary area alone.

I would like to congratulate the University of Calgary on its new strategic vision entitled, “Eyes High”, as well as on the opening of the Taylor Family Digital Library, a new state-of-the-art learning and research facility. The building houses a library, archive and art gallery, and features unique technologies like editing suites, touch tables and a wall-size visualization screen.

This exceptional facility, one which our government is proud to have supported, fosters research and innovation, integrates art and culture, and is focused on enhancing the student experience.

In addition, it has received the prestigious gold leadership in energy and environmental design certification, meaning it operates with a focus on limiting its impact on our environment.

I congratulate the University of Calgary on opening this cutting-edge facility, as well as on the launch of its collaborative and ambitious “Eyes High” vision.

* * *

BAHRAIN

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Bahrain has hit a new low.

After months of crackdowns on legitimate protests, courts are now handing out ridiculous sentences to doctors who have treated protestors. In fact, some 20 doctors have been sentenced up to 20 years in jail; their supposed crimes: doing their jobs, their duty under the Hippocratic oath. These rulings are unacceptable and fly in the face of international human rights law and Canadian values.

I call on all hon. members to join me in condemning these outrages, in calling for clemency for these Bahraini doctors and in supporting the democratic ambitions of all Bahrainis.

* * *

PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week I had the pleasure of reintroducing my motion to return passenger rail service to Thunder Bay and the spectacular north shore of Lake Superior. This line was cut by the Mulroney Conservative government despite being VIA's busiest route.

Today rail has been experiencing a renaissance, because it is environmentally friendly, energy efficient and a great way to travel. This is one small but very important step toward getting Canada back on track with a national transit strategy.

Statements by Members

Returning passenger rail service to one of the most scenic routes in our country, through Marathon, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Nipigon and Thunder Bay, will be a huge boost to those communities and to rail tourism as well.

I call upon the Minister of Transport and all parties in this House to support my motion to renew passenger rail in Canada.

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JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the 100th anniversary of the appointment of Canada's first judge advocate general.

[Translation]

On October 1, 1911, Colonel Henry Smith was appointed Judge Advocate General. This marked the first time that a Canadian officer was responsible for the provision of legal services to the Canadian Forces. For 100 years now, military lawyers have served with distinction, both in Canada and around the world.

● (1110)

[English]

The JAG is legal adviser in matters of military law to the Governor General, the Minister and Department of National Defence, and the Canadian armed forces. The JAG also superintends the administration of military justice in the Canadian Forces.

Today 208 regular and reserve force military lawyers provide legal advice to Canadian military contingents in Afghanistan, the Gulf, north and central Africa, Europe and the United States. Nearly 100 legal officers were deployed to Afghanistan, ensuring that our military efforts there were in accordance with the rule of law.

Canadians can take great pride in the achievements of their military lawyers. I congratulate the current judge advocate general, Brigadier-General Blaise Cathcart, and his entire team on the 100th anniversary of this great institution.

* * *

TORONTO AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one would think communities living near the building of a major transportation infrastructure should be able to participate in some of the gain instead of all of the pain.

In the case of the air-rail link being built from Pearson airport to Union Station, the very folks who through their taxes are helping to pay for this service have to live through the disruptions of it being built, and have to live with the health consequences of the decisions of the Ontario Liberal government, with money from the federal Conservative government, to use diesel trains instead of electric trains.

Statements by Members

Toronto will be the only major city in the world to be running an air-rail link using diesel. Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen that is particularly dangerous to children and the elderly.

Hundreds of thousands of people live within a kilometre of this line in Toronto, including many in my riding of Davenport. The people in my riding are hard-working, progressive and honest folks. They know we need better and more mass public transit, but they want it built right the first time and they want it accessible to their community. And when they get on one of these trains, they want that train to be an electric train.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to mark Canada's first National Seniors Day, which will happen this Saturday.

[Translation]

I am pleased to rise here today to mark National Seniors Day this Saturday.

[English]

It is important to celebrate what seniors have done and continue to do for our country. They deserve our gratitude and recognition. That is why we passed a bill last year to officially establish October 1 as an annual celebration of seniors. This coincides with the UN International Day of Older Persons. It is an occasion for all Canadians to show their appreciation for our older generation.

Today we recognize the many contributions seniors have made and continue to make as mentors and leaders in strengthening our families, communities and workplaces. I invite everyone to join me in thanking Canada's seniors for making a positive difference in all our lives. Together we will recognize that many seniors who give so generously of themselves make this country a better place to live in the world.

This October 1, let us celebrate National Seniors Day.

* * *

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three young Canadians did us proud last summer at the 2011 National Geographic World Championship held in California.

Alexander Cohen, a student at Ashbury College in Ottawa—Vanier, and his teammates, Aoife O'Leary of Surrey, B.C. and Alejandro Torres-Lopez of North Vancouver, won the silver medal to Russia's gold and Vietnam's bronze.

The National Geographic World Championship, hosted by Alex Trebek, is a two-day international geography competition held every two years. Seventeen teams of geography students from around the globe met to take part in this tournament. After three years of being in the top three of the Great Canadian Geography Challenge, Alexander placed first this year and made the Canadian team for the championship.

Today Alex turns 16. I wish him a happy birthday. May his gift this year be to win the gold for Canada. We are proud of him.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government received a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe. Part of that means ensuring we have a correctional system that actually corrects criminal behaviour.

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, at the urging of our government, has undertaken a study on how illegal drugs that get into our prisons impact the safety and effectiveness of our correctional system. However, yesterday the NDP member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant shockingly said that taking drugs out of prison makes them less safe. That is unbelievable. That is the same party that has consistently voted against our tough on crime measures.

Our Conservative government believes in delivering on our campaign commitment to establish drug-free prisons. Canadians expect no less. I call on the NDP to finally stop putting the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of law-abiding citizens.

* * *

● (1115)

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 1985, the United Nations General Assembly declared the first Monday of October every year World Habitat Day.

As our housing critic, I particularly wanted to mark this day, which will be on Monday, October 3 this year.

The right to housing is recognized by the UN as a basic human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to housing also appears in most constitutions around the world, which recognize every individual's right to decent, safe and affordable housing.

I would therefore like to draw the House's attention to the exceptional work being done by non-profit organizations dedicated to protecting tenants' rights.

In closing, I would like to point out to the government that their demands are not unreasonable; they simply want the government to maintain the current number of affordable housing units and build new units so that all Canadian families can have access to affordable, adequate and safe housing.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while our Conservative government is focused on helping create jobs and growing the economy with our job-creating pro-trade and low-tax plan, the NDP is publicly demanding higher taxes.

Yesterday, the NDP MPs also publicly attacked our Conservative government's reduction of the GST from 7% to 5%, bemoaning the fact that Canadian families were keeping more of their own hard-earned money and not big government. NDP members have stated that cutting the GST was probably the worst measure that this government could have adopted. The member for Beauport—Limoulu said that reducing the GST was a serious problem. Now the NDP finance critic has demanded Canadians and Canadian job creators be forced to pay yet another new tax, this time on daily financial transactions.

Our ambitious pro-trade low-tax plan to create jobs and economic growth is working. Meanwhile, the NDP's anti-trade high-tax job-killing plan is reckless. The NDP's anti-trade high-tax plan is yet another worrying example that the NDP is not fit to govern.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that the government's fiscal plan is unsustainable. Its ill-conceived corporate tax cuts are responsible for the fiasco we are facing.

The cuts, which amount to \$15 billion a year in lost revenue, are almost exactly the same amount as the PBO's estimate for the structural deficit. That is further evidence of the Conservative government's mismanagement of the economy.

When will the Conservatives listen to reason and cancel the next gift to profitable corporations?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's facts are very deceiving. In fact, the low tax plan that the government has put in place is actually addressing the issue he is talking about.

The long recognized aging population issue will impact Canadians, as would the \$10 billion hike in taxes that the NDP would need.

Our low tax plan will help seniors prepare for retirement.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's priorities are quite clear. It wants to give \$60 billion in tax cuts to mostly large, profitable corporations. As we have just heard, it is using the bogus argument that this will result in jobs for Canadians. At the same time, the government is imposing a \$16 million EI tax hike on the payrolls of small businesses and the paycheques of workers.

Oral Questions

It is rewarding corporations for non-performance and is over-charging Canadians for an employment insurance program that the Conservatives are using as a deficit-fighting tool.

When will the government put middle-class Canadian families first?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last three budgets that the NDP voted against included plans to help ordinary Canadians. In fact, the tax reductions we have put in place provide a Canadian family of four over \$3,000 in additional moneys, leaving it in that family's pockets where it should be.

That is what helps Canadians, not a \$10 billion tax hike.

[Translation]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two million Canadians are unemployed and will be for a long time because the Conservatives' economic inaction plan is a disaster. This particularly holds true for young people. There are approximately 200,000 more unemployed youth than there were before the last recession. This is mortgaging the future of our country, but the Conservatives are satisfied.

Why do the Conservatives refuse to admit that their policy is not working? Why not invest in people?

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not satisfied if one Canadian who wants to work is still looking for a job. That is why our last budget focused on jobs and growth.

We continue to put forward tax reductions for businesses that actually hire young and middle-age Canadians. The most important contribution we can make is to provide an avenue for businesses to create more jobs for Canadians. That is witnessed by the fact that there are 600,000 more Canadians now working than there were at the end of the recession.

* * *

[Translation]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The NDP agrees that the cost of private members' bills should be calculated, but the government is tying the Parliamentary Budget Officer's hands. It has slashed his budget and is refusing to provide his office with the resources he needs to do his job. It makes us wonder whether the Conservatives really want the cost of private members' bills to be calculated or whether this is one of their political manoeuvres to overload him and prevent him from examining public finances.

Will the government give the Parliamentary Budget Officer the means to do his job?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe the people of Canada, as well as the members of Parliament who are making decisions on legislation, deserve to know what the cost is of that legislation.

Committees are the masters of their own business. That is where that motion originated. However, there is merit in what the suggestion that Canadians should be able to know what the cost proposals are. It is a very good value.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have already said that the NDP supports the costing of private members' bills. However, it is obvious that the Conservatives are attacking the Parliamentary Budget Officer for telling the truth about the Conservatives' poor fiscal management. Suddenly, they are saying they support his mandate. Will they use the same logic with their crime bill? All week, the ministers refused, over and over again, to give this bill a price tag, despite our repeated requests.

Will the government allow the Parliamentary Budget Officer to cost its bills before they are passed in the House?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reports to Parliament and offers opinions all the time on all kinds of things. Recently, I have noticed that some of the media have commented on how accurate those comments are. People can make their own judgments on that.

However, the government's perspective is clear. We set out clear budget plans. We follow them. The costs of what we are doing are clear. We issue supplementary estimates and estimates all the time that set out those costs.

The one thing that is different regarding the costs set out by the government and what they would be under the NDP is that we are actually respecting tax dollars. We are trying to keep spending down. We are not looking at ramping up the costs of government the way the NDP would.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians are struggling just to get by, Conservative ministers are abusing private jet privileges and are using helicopters to pick them up from fishing trips.

Now we learn that the Minister of Foreign Affairs insists on having golden business cards, this despite the fact that using gold on business cards breaks Treasury Board rules because it is too expensive.

Why is the minister breaking government rules? Why is he giving taxpayers the gold finger?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I arrived at Parliament this morning I was deeply

disturbed when I realized that the President of the Treasury Board was not here to take this question.

I remember a time when the Liberal Party of Canada used to think big on foreign affairs. Its members would think about big issues around the world. When it came to Canada and domestic issues, they would think about big issues. Now they are returning to a time when they are dealing with \$400 worth of business cards. That is exactly why Canadians have them sitting in the far corner.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to be quite the quid pro quo going on over there. The Minister of Foreign Affairs gives the President of the Treasury Board a \$50 million slush fund for his riding. Then the President of the Treasury Board lets the Minister of Foreign Affairs break the rules to get his golden business cards. It is a very expensive game of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours".

When Canadians are struggling just to get by, why are Conservative ministers showering each other with gold? Why the golden showers?

● (1125)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, I sat down with the President of the Treasury Board and I said, "Have I got a deal for you. I'll give you \$50 million worth of infrastructure funds if you will give me \$400 worth of business cards".

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is millions of dollars in a local slush fund, useless advertising or fancy business cards that are against the rules, this government will stop at nothing to promote itself.

In 2009, the former industry minister spent \$20,000 on photography services in the national capital region alone. How is such outrageous spending on shameful self-promotion justified?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we compare the records of the current Minister of National Defence to those of his Liberal predecessor we would find that the former Liberal minister of national defence used the Challenger significantly more than the frugal current Minister of National Defence has, but of course the Liberal minister was only the minister for 18 short months.

We are ensuring that taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely and well. We are focused on returning Canada to a balanced budget. We are focusing on jobs and economic growth. The good news is that plan is working. We have seen the creation of literally hundreds of thousands of net new jobs over the past two years.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for several years now 6,800 veterans who are disabled have been fighting the government over what is called SISIP benefit reduction. Two DND ombudsmen have said that this is unfair. The veterans committee, the Senate committee and the House all voted to change this practice.

Why is the government spending over half a million dollars of hard-earned money fighting these disabled veterans in court? Why does the government not stop the court proceedings, deal with these veterans and reach a comparable settlement?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, injured personnel in the Canadian Forces are covered by a long-term disability insurance plan similar to the RCMP and other public servants. As the member well knows, they are also eligible for a Veterans Affairs Canada disability award of up to \$270,000 under the new veterans charter, as well as an accidental dismemberment benefit of up to \$250,000 under the Canadian Forces accidental dismemberment insurance plan.

If the member opposite is referring to a matter that is now before the courts, it would not be appropriate for us to comment on that at this time.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in fairness to the hon. member, as he is new to the House it is quite possible that he does not understand what the SISIP benefit reduction is. It is a sinful, disgraceful act wherein disabled veterans get one aspect of an insurance policy clawed back from their regular benefits. That is why they have gone to court.

This court action can stop right now. All it takes is for the Prime Minister to nod his head and stop the court proceedings. He should stop taking these disabled veterans to court and stop Dingwalling this Parliament, as the Treasury Board president and the defence minister are doing, and deal with the disabled heroes of this country in a fair and proper manner.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite cares to review the real statistic he will find that this government has done more for veterans and more for members of the Canadian Forces than any government in history.

The member's party voted against our missions in Afghanistan and Libya, voted against new equipment purchases under Canada's economic action plan, and questioned the minister's effort to do his duty by honouring the families of fallen soldiers during repatriation ceremonies. I would ask the member if he and his party have an ounce of support left for the Canadian Forces.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs thinks he can do whatever he wants. Today we learn that he broke the rules against having gold-plated business cards. Unfortunately, that is not the worst of it. There is not a word of French on these business cards.

Oral Questions

When the minister travels, does he represent all Canadians or just those who speak English?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to send over a business card that is in both official languages.

● (1130)

[Translation]

It says, "Minister of Foreign Affairs, 125 Sussex Drive". All the information is available in both French and English.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I sent him my card just as an example and actually it is in three languages because some of us also include a language for the visually challenged.

I wonder if the member might help with that because when the jet-setting Conservatives have their ministers—

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Oh, come on.

Mr. David Anderson: It's a question for the leader. That's a leadership question.

The Speaker: Order. The least members could do is wait until the question has been asked before they try to answer it.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members can make fun of people who have disabilities. Frankly, it is about example and what this minister is saying is that it is better to have gold on a member's card than French.

Will he commit today to getting rid of his unilingual gold-plated card and actually represent this country the way it should be represented?

[Translation]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have business cards in both official languages. I will give one to my colleague.

[English]

While I am up, let me congratulate the member opposite. Sunday will be a very big day in Ottawa Centre. The member for Ottawa Centre will be announcing his campaign for the leadership of the NDP. On behalf of all my constituents in Ottawa West—Nepean, I want to wish him the very best of luck.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Treasury Board policy dictates that the minister must provide a detailed cost analysis for any policy, regulatory or legislative change that is introduced. Could the President of the Treasury Board table today the cost analysis done for the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board? If he cannot or will not provide that analysis, perhaps he would explain how he can dismantle a \$6 billion-a-year corporation and throw the entire prairie agriculture economy into chaos without doing a cost-benefit analysis.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the root of all of this is marketing freedom for western Canadian farmers. We intend to deliver on that. Farmers have done the cost-benefit analysis farm gate by farm gate. They have voted with their air seeders and their trucks and have moved on to new commodities.

They have taken away market share from the wheats, durums and barleys in Canada. We know there is a global market demanding more of those products. If we look at the Australian model, it is producing up to 30% more of those commodities for a hungry world.

That is all the cost-benefit analysis that Canadian farmers need. They know they can step up and produce. I wish the member would get on board with them.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food wants to dismantle the largest and most successful grain marketing company in the world based on a whim. It is becoming a hallmark of the government to hide the true costs of its policies, whether it is the crime and punishment cost of prisons, or the true cost of the F-35 or, now, the real cost of dismantling the Wheat Board.

KPMG says that it will cost \$500 million in closing costs alone, never mind the impact to the prairie rural agriculture economy.

How can the government justify indulging the notion and the whim of the minister, at such an extraordinary cost, to abolish the Wheat Board without even knowing the cost benefit analysis?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will give the member some homework this weekend. When he goes home to his riding in downtown Winnipeg, he should check with—oh, yes, there are no farmers there. Or, maybe when he goes on to his principal residence on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, he could check with—oh, they are not under the Wheat Board.

He does not have a clue what he is talking about.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled in favour of InSite and against years of Conservative interference. The Supreme Court found that the government arbitrarily infringed on the rights of individuals to receive the treatment and help they so desperately need.

The government has an opportunity here to take off its ideological blinders and support a vital public service that has saved lives and given people hope. Will the government do that?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although we are disappointed with the Supreme Court of Canada's decision today, we will comply.

We believe that the system should be focused on preventing people from becoming drug addicts. A key pillar of the national anti-drug strategy is prevention and treatment for those with drug dependency. As part of our strategy, we have made significant investments to strengthen existing treatment efforts through the treatment action plan. We will be reviewing the court decision.

• (1135)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what InSite does.

Since it opened in 2003 in my riding, fatal overdoses have dropped by over one-third. More people get treatment, as InSite is there to connect people with the services they need. Today, the people who use this service have had their voices heard. The Supreme Court agrees, health professionals agree and international health experts agree.

Will the Conservatives admit their failed approach and acknowledge that InSite protects public health and saves lives? Will they stop being the barrier to this very important service?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, our government believes that spending more money on treatment and support to help people get off drugs is the best investment we can make.

As I also said earlier, we will be reviewing the decision. In fairness, the decision was made two hours ago. I stated that we will be reviewing it and we will be reviewing it.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling is clear. Insite saves lives without compromising public safety. Nonetheless, instead of looking at the facts and scientific studies, this government has spent years in court, at the taxpayers' expense, trying to shut down the Insite clinic.

Will this government finally put aside its ideology and act in the best interest of the health and public safety of all Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we are disappointed with the decision but we will comply. I also stated earlier that we believe the system should be focused on preventing people from becoming drug addicts in the first place.

The key pillar of our national anti-drug strategy is prevention and treatment for those with drug dependencies.

I said earlier that we will be reviewing the Supreme Court decision and we will be doing that.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I read the news this morning and took delight in what I saw. It was basically a bad Austin Powers movie in which I saw Dr. Evil and Goldmember deciding how to order around government resources.

What possesses the Minister of Foreign Affairs to actually order around Treasury Board as such?

The irony is that the Conservatives just put forward a private member's bill in the House frowning on getting rid of the flag or the word "Canada", and that is exactly what he just did.

Would the hon. Goldmember please rise and answer to this?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the member and pleased to inform the House that the word "Canada" is on my business card.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the defence minister has become a frequent flyer, abusing both government jets and search and rescue helicopters, but it is completely unacceptable that the Prime Minister uses our courageous men and women of the armed forces to justify that minister's abuse.

Repatriation ceremonies are planned days in advance. It is no wonder he is so "highly regarded". He is on the frequent flyer program.

How can other ministers manage to use commercial flights, while that minister uses the government fleet as his own personal airline?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the attendance at ceremonies for the repatriation of soldiers who have fallen in Afghanistan is a serious affair. They are not planned well in advance. Obviously, they are a product of unfortunate events abroad.

The Minister of National Defence has felt it important to attend those ceremonies. The use of government jets by him, notwithstanding that those events did not occur so much in the past under the

Oral Questions

Liberal government, has still been significantly lower than that of the Liberal government.

In 2004-2005, from August to August, the member for Wascana used government jets for 135 hours. By comparison, in 2010, the entire Conservative cabinet used them for 136 hours. Almost exactly the same amount.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of the Environment suggested that I do my own research instead of listening to the media.

Did the minister do his own research and consult with scientists about the impact of his proposed cuts to ozone research?

If the minister doubts the reports of an international witch hunt in the media, will he either unmuzzle his scientists or at least state that there will be no cuts to the ozone monitoring network?

• (1140)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister and myself have said repeatedly in the House that we are not cutting our ozone monitoring program. We will continue to monitor ozone. I invite the member opposite to review those statements as well.

* * *

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians spend, on average, 75 minutes a day getting to work, which is 32 working days a year. Days wasted being stuck in traffic is costing the economy \$5 billion a year. Traffic gridlock and crumbling roads are all around us and Canada is the only G8 country without a national transit strategy.

Does the minister agree with me that Canada is falling behind on public transit?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the facts. Like all other G8 countries, Canada assigns responsibility for public transit to the provinces and municipalities.

Since 2006, we have invested \$5 billion into public transit across Canada, and we will continue to do that.

Oral Questions

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time to get Canada moving. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, big city mayors, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Urban Transit Authority have all been calling for a national transit strategy.

My bill sets a plan for all levels of government to work together to establish a national vision for public transit.

Will the government get Canada moving and join together with the New Democrats to finally establish a national transit plan?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government recognizes the value of modern and efficient urban transit. We have been a strong partner with the provinces and municipalities to help them build some of the best transit systems in the world. However, it is not the role of the federal government to tell cities how to run their transit systems.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in all of the country's major cities, workers are encountering frustrating traffic congestion every day. Our road infrastructure is crumbling. In Montreal, people are afraid to cross the Champlain Bridge. In Toronto, there is no longer any such thing as rush hour; every hour of the day and night is rush hour.

Is the government going to respond to the unanimous demands of cities and business people and provide public transit that is reliable, accessible and affordable?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never in the history of this country has a government invested more in the development and repair of infrastructure than this government has. We have invested a significant amount of money in the Toronto Rocket project in the greater Toronto area, among other things.

What has the NDP done? Today, they will talk the talk but then, when it comes time to act, they vote against the projects.

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities can try to defend himself but Canada is still the only G8 country that does not have a public transit strategy. There are needs in every major Canadian city. The mayors of these big cities have been asking for a public transit strategy since 2007. I believe that the Conservatives were elected in 2007.

When will this government listen to the needs of the people of Canada and provide an accessible public transit system?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member's preamble. Canada, like all G8 countries, lets the municipal and provincial governments handle public transit in all areas of the country.

In any case, her party wants to centralize everything in Ottawa. On our side, we think that municipal and provincial representatives are

much more aware of the needs of their people and that we, here in Ottawa, are not in the best position to tell Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto or Vancouver what is right for their municipality.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's national anti-drug strategy aims to prevent Canadians from starting to take drugs and to provide treatment for those with drug dependencies.

This morning, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered a decision that may have an impact on those with drug dependencies.

I wonder if the Minister of Health would like to provide further comment to the House on that decision.

• (1145)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, although we are disappointed with the Supreme Court of Canada's decision this morning, we will comply.

We have always believed that the system should be focused on preventing people from becoming drug addicts in the first place. Our government believes that spending more money on treatment and on support for individuals to get the help they need to get off drugs is the best investment we can provide to Canadians.

As part of that strategy, we have made significant investments to strengthen existing treatment efforts through the treatment action plan.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been 113 days and still no response from the Muskoka minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is responsible for implementing the rules on access to information, but here he is conducting government business on the side from his personal blackberry account so that he can cover his tracks.

Why is the minister using every trick in the book to hide? Why will he not agree to be accountable in the House?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has an outstanding record of public service.

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The President of the Treasury Board voted for the Federal Accountability Act, which expanded access to information to a huge number of new agencies. For the first time in Canadian history in the House, every New Democratic member voted to withdraw access to information, to bring a cloak of secrecy over the Canadian Wheat Board.

The NDP is no party to lecture this government on access to information. We are the ones who made it more open.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the subject of accountability, the Muskoka minister has brought a new innovation to Conservative cover-up. It is to use of a personal email account to conduct government business. There is no need to worry about access to information. There is no need to worry about doing a little government business on the side.

We have emails from the minister to the mayor of Huntsville.

Would the government agree to release the rest of the minister's G8 slush fund emails?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is excited to have the opportunity to visit the committee to address any concerns it may have.

I have some good news for my friend from Davenport. Not only will the President of the Treasury Board be at that committee hearing, but I have even offered to go with him to assist in any way I possibly can. I do hope the member for Davenport will be there. He can rest assured that if the President of the Treasury Board does not have the answers, I will be more than pleased to stand up and respond.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after 113 days, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka still refuses to answer to Canadians. We recently discovered that he personally intervened to have a project included in the building Canada fund. The Prime Minister's guide for ministers states, and I quote, "You must answer all questions pertaining to your areas of responsibility..."

So why does this minister refuse to abide by that and to answer questions that pertain to him?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is because the minister is not here. That is why he cannot stand up and reply today.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka should be capable of answering for his actions to all Canadians.

The NDP revealed that he found a job for one of his friends and that he intervened in an internal review of G8 spending. Through his personal emails, we were able to see what happened with the \$50 million of public money.

Should the minister not be able to rise and respond?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to tell my colleague that the President of the Treasury Board will appear before a House committee to answer all the questions that members have for him. I have good news for my colleague: he will get two for the price of one, because I will be there too. As always, I am happy to answer questions with my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board.

* * *

● (1150)

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, doctors around the world have been saying it, the CMA has been saying it, and now the Supreme Court has said it unanimously: Insite in Vancouver saves lives. That is why the Liberal government supported it from the start, choosing life over death.

With today's hearty slap in the face by Canada's highest court, will the government finally admit it was wrong in its ideological attacks against Insite? What does the minister mean by "We will be reviewing it"?

Will the government respect the Supreme Court's decision and stop attacking Insite?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not to repeat my answers that I provided earlier, the decision was released two hours ago. We will review the decision of the Supreme Court.

I am sure the members opposite have not had the opportunity to review the decision either. We will do our part and our due diligence and review the Supreme Court decision.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2010 the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism exceeded his targets with overall immigration, but fell short when it came to families.

The greatest backlogs today in immigration deal with parents. We have Canadians who are trying to get their loved ones, their parents, to be able to come to Canada. The government, more than any other government in the history of Canada, continues to add to the backlog. It fell short in the area where there is the greatest demand in terms of trying to get families reunited.

Why does the government not believe in allowing parents to be reunited with—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the louder the member yells does not necessarily mean it is going to bring more people into this country.

Oral Questions

I can tell the member one thing: when we took over government, we were left with a mess from the previous Liberal government in terms of backlogs, in terms of its fear of making decisions with respect to immigration, its fear of increasing the number of people who could come to this country to start a new life.

That fear is gone. This government understands where it is going on immigration. It understands why it is doing it. Families across this country understand what this government is doing.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time for this government to agree to study hydraulic fracturing. The problem, however, is that this practice is already taking place. Communities have good reason to be worried about the chemicals being used and the groundwater being contaminated.

Will the minister respect the government's mandate, which is to regulate this practice, instead of simply waiting until new studies are published?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that this is mainly a provincial and territorial responsibility.

I had the pleasure of debating this very issue during adjournment proceedings last week. I can tell the member opposite that a greater understanding of environmental impacts will benefit us all. That is why we have put forward two studies that we mentioned last week.

Let me remind my colleague that our government has created nearly 600,000 new jobs and that responsible development of shale gas has a potential to create even more.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only does hydraulic fracturing require enormous amounts of water, but the process also uses a toxic brew of chemicals to pollute groundwater. Exactly what chemicals remains a mystery, as companies are not required to disclose that information.

When will the government close the regulatory loopholes and force companies to reveal what chemicals they are injecting into our groundwater?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said last week in adjournment proceedings, the Minister of the Environment has recommended a proposal to the Council of Canadian Academies for an independent expert panel assessment of the state of scientific knowledge on potential environmental impacts. He has also asked it to review mitigation options.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on the economy and helping create jobs with the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

In fact, across Canada small businesses are expanding with help from job-creating measures like the hiring credit for small business that was in the last budget. Manufacturers are also growing, with new tax relief for new productivity-improving machinery and equipment, a measure that was also extended in the last budget.

Can the Minister of State (Finance), the pride of Claresholm, Alberta, please update the House on the state of the economy and the impact of these specific measures?

● (1155)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chair of the finance committee, who is doing a great job on that committee, for a wonderful question.

In answer to that question, again today Statistics Canada has reported that July's GDP numbers have actually grown. That is good news.

Why have they grown? It is because we have a plan to get people back to work. We have a plan to increase jobs in this country. In fact, there are 600,000 more people working now than there were in July of 2009. The plan is working, and so are more Canadians.

However, we do need to remember that the economic recovery is fragile around the world, and we need to be—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Wascana.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is concern across the country among many law-abiding Canadian citizens and taxpayers about the long arm of the U.S. tax collection department. Even the Canadian Bankers Association is upset. The Americans are trying to enforce their laws beyond their borders and are threatening Canadians to that effect.

So far, the government has offered Canadians tea and sympathy. Will the government do something a little more tangible? Will it set up an advocacy centre to actively inform and assist Canadians who are unfairly being put upon by the extraterritorial excursions of the U.S. IRS?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly we are concerned with what is happening to many honest taxpaying Canadians who were not expecting this to be imposed upon them. The finance minister has spoken to his U.S. counterpart, saying in no uncertain terms that we do not want this unfair treatment to Canadian taxpayers who are honest law-abiding citizens. We are encouraging the U.S. to be very fair with our citizens.

CANADIAN AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with no notice, Downsview Park closed the doors on the Canadian Air and Space Museum and ordered Canadian veterans to remove all of their artifacts. The historic de Havilland factory will now make way for a hockey arena.

Yesterday and today the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages claimed that apparently the Conservative government was elected on a mandate to invest in Canadian museums.

Why will it not order this museum opened again, and defend it and the historic Avro Arrow?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Downsview Park is a crown corporation that is at arm's length from the government, and this was a business decision that Downsview Park took.

As we know, this is a private museum, and I applaud the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages because he has directed his officials to see if the Canada Aviation and Space Museum could work with this museum to see if there is a way that it can accommodate its historical treasures.

* * *

CANADA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I attended a meeting on Tuesday for the election of a new executive for the Canada-Israel group, I was most disappointed to see how few opposition members bothered to show up. Only three Liberal MPs and, shockingly, zero NDP MPs chose to attend. Let us compare that with the 60 Conservative MPs present.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration inform the House how our government is taking action on issues that are important to Canada-Israel relations and to the Jewish community in Canada?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. speaker, it is very disappointing that not one member of the NDP actually chose to attend this event and that only three Liberal members attended.

Whether it is our refusal to participate in the Durban II and III conferences, standing up for a negotiated two-party solution between Israel and Palestine, supporting a national task force on Holocaust research, or becoming the first country to sign the Ottawa protocol, our government's record of taking a principled stand against anti-Semitism and standing up for the Jewish community is clear.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, suicide prevention should be a national priority. Tragically, Canada's aboriginal youth suicide rate is five to six times higher than the Canadian average.

We know that providing healthy alternatives is the key: investments in education, recreation centres and the necessary

Oral Questions

programming. Prevention requires investment and does not mean waiting for the suicide rate to go up in communities.

When will the Conservatives work with aboriginal communities, listen to the needs of aboriginal young people and stand up to build hope for so many of these people across our country?

● (1200)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, too many Canadian families have to deal with the anguish of losing a loved one to suicide. That is why our government is funding programs to build their strength on protective factors, such as ensuring that family and community supports are there. In budget 2010, \$75 million was spent to implement the national aboriginal suicide prevention strategy to assist over 150 community-based projects.

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[Translation]

MONARCHIST SYMBOLS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are clearly impressed by princess stories and seem willing to spare no expense to impose monarchist symbols: displaying the Queen's portrait at the Department of Foreign Affairs and in embassies, installing a stained glass window in the Senate, redesigning passports to include the crown, adding "royal" to the designation of the air force and navy, spending millions of dollars on royal visits, and I could go on.

Instead of applauding, is the already discredited President of the Treasury Board not ashamed to be spending so much money on archaic symbols rejected by the Quebec nation, when he is imposing such drastic cuts on services to the public?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that when this member first arrived in Ottawa, he put his hand on the Bible and took an oath to Queen Elizabeth II and her rightful heirs and successors. He did not do it once; he took an oath to the Queen at least for four or five times, and so did each member of the House.

Queen Elizabeth II is our head of state. I know there is great enthusiasm for the great work the Minister of National Defence did in going back to the old symbols of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

We are also very pleased that portraits of Canada's head of state now proudly adorn the walls of all of our museums around the world.

*Routine Proceedings***POINTS OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do have a point of order. I know that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is having a bit of a hard day today as he shuffles through all his business cards, trying to figure out which one he is actually using, gold or not. I know he might be happy that a certain member is not here today, but I would gently remind him that he does know the rules of the House, that he should not refer to a member who is not present in the House. I would just remind him of that. I know he is having a hard day today.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the wise counsel from my friend from Vancouver East. If the President of the Treasury Board or his family or any of his constituents were offended by my unacceptable actions, I apologize.

* * *

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: On two occasions this week, during statements by members, once by a member of the government caucus and once by a member of the official opposition, individual members took it upon themselves to recognize special guests who are in the galleries. I want to remind all hon. members that it has been a long-standing practice in the House that this is a prerogative of the Chair.

As O'Brien and Bosc's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states at page 284:

Only from the Speaker's Gallery can distinguished visitors (such as heads of state, heads of government and parliamentary delegations invited to Canada and celebrated Canadians) be recognized and introduced to the House, and only by the Speaker. Members other than the Speaker may not refer to the presence of any visitors in the galleries at any time.

[Translation]

Only distinguished visitors can be recognized and introduced to the House, and only by the Speaker.

[English]

I ask for the co-operation of all members in respecting this approach as it ensures fairness and safeguards the time of the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32 (2), I have the honour to table in both official languages three treaties.

They are: first, exchange of notes between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America, constituting the agreement amending Chapter 4, Annex 4 of the Treaty between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America concerning Pacific salmon, done at Washington on December 21, 2010; second, third protocol amending

the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia, done at Hanoi on July 23, 2010; and third, agreement between Canada and the Hellenic Republic concerning youth mobility, done at Athens on May 28, 2011.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty. I have two copies of each treaty to table.

* * *

• (1205)

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-304, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (protecting freedom).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to introduce a bill entitled "An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (protecting freedom)".

Freedom of speech is a fundamental principle in our democracy and one which Canadians have fought and died for, for over a century. This is not a fight that one Canadian can take on himself, but rather an issue that all Canadians must engage in vigorously.

In this, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues such as Senator Finley and the member for St. Catharines who have rigorously pursued a freer, more open society, and resisted the tyrannical instincts of bureaucracy to censor speech in our great country.

Freedom of speech is the freedom that all other freedoms are built on. It cannot be restrained to the politically correct. The best way to fight bigotry is to ensure that we protect and enhance our fundamental freedoms in this great country of ours. That is why I ask all members in this House to support this bill that protects the fundamental building block of democracy: freedom of speech. God bless.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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NATIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT STRATEGY ACT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-305, An Act to establish a National Public Transit Strategy.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, to introduce a bill to establish a national public transit strategy for Canada.

[Translation]

I rise today to introduce this bill, which would establish a national public transit strategy.

[English]

The strategy would secure a permanent federal investment plan in innovation research. It would provide federal leadership in working with all levels of government to co-ordinate planning. This strategy would get Canada moving in line with other G8 nations by helping to provide public transit that is fast, accessible and affordable to all Canadians.

[Translation]

This would help move Canada forward.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-306, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (political affiliation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, for seconding this bill and for the excellent work he has done for a number of years on bills that are important to Canadians. I am honoured and very pleased to introduce my first bill in this House regarding political affiliation. This bill follows up on one of my party's election promises: to ensure that politicians are held accountable for the choice made by their constituents, and to prevent them from playing politics to benefit their personal careers by changing political parties when they feel like it.

[English]

With it we are helping to fix Ottawa.

[Translation]

The bill provides that a member's seat in the House of Commons will be vacated and a by-election called for that seat if the member was elected to the House as a member of a political party, as the case may be. However, the seat will not be vacated if the member, having been elected as a member of a political party, chooses to sit as an independent.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1210)

[English]

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank one of my constituents for organizing this petition. I am honoured to present a petition to the Government of Canada which draws its attention to have offences against children broken down into categories such as inappropriate touching, pornography, assault, and battery and rape, with each carrying a sentence commensurate with the crime. Rape seems to cause the most damage psychologically and physically, therefore the petitioners would like to see longer than three year jail sentences, preferably 10 to 20 years for pedophiles with no chance of parole and no pardons.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give thanks to a constituent in my riding for providing me with this petition from Calgary which states that immigration processing time for sponsoring parents is causing great hardships and is preventing families from being together. Due to lengthy processing times in some immigration categories thousands of

Government Orders

families every year are being kept apart. This picks up on the issue that I raised today in question period, which is that the government needs to have more of a caring heart in terms of speeding up the process of enabling parents abroad, in a fair and more timely fashion, to come to Canada as quickly as possible.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR, 2012

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 28(2)(b), I have the honour to lay upon the table the House of Commons calendar for the year 2012.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SENATE REFORM ACT

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC) moved that Bill C-7, An Act respecting the selection of senators and amending the Constitution Act, 1867 in respect of Senate term limits, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin debate today on the Senate reform act, Bill C-7. The bill has been a long time coming. Reform of the other place has been the subject of strong passions across the country that have crossed party lines for the better part of a quarter century. While the government's priorities are unchanged and the economy remains a top priority, we have an opportunity to take the first steps on this road.

Our government has always been clear about our commitment to bring reform to the Senate chamber. We pledged to do this in our most recent election platform and we repeated our promise in the Speech from the Throne. I am proud to present this legislation and to start the work in the House to fulfill our commitments to Canadians.

The Senate can play an important role in our parliamentary system. It reviews statutes and legislation, often from different perspectives than those found in this place. It serves to represent regional and minority interests in a different way than they are represented in the House. Many of its members and committees have demonstrated and provided appreciable research and investigative skills and thoughtful recommendations. It can be a place where a broader range of experience and expertise can be brought to bear on the issues facing our country.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, the contributions of the Senate are overshadowed by the fact that senators are selected and appointed through a process that is neither formal nor transparent, with no democratic mandate whatsoever from Canadians.

Moreover, there are no strict limits on the number of years an individual can sit in the Senate. Under the Constitution, an individual can be appointed to the Senate at the age of 30 and serve until the age of 75. That means a senator could serve for as long as 45 years.

Taken together, the Senate lacks any essential democratic characteristics. Its effectiveness and legitimacy suffers from the democratic deficit.

We must then ask ourselves the simple question. Is this good enough? Our answer and Canadians' answer is no. Our government does not believe that the current situation is acceptable in a modern, representative democracy, and neither do Canadians.

Our government has long believed that the status quo in the Senate is unacceptable and therefore it must change in order to reach its full potential as an accountable and democratic institution. The alternative is the continuation of a situation where senators are appointed to long terms without any democratic mandate. We say enough, and Canadians are with us in saying no to the status quo in the Senate.

In July of this year, polling found that seven out of ten Canadians reject the status quo in the Senate. Although striking, this is not shocking. The Senate and its reform has been the subject of numerous reports, proposals and studies over the past several decades.

While recommendations on how to reform the Senate have differed, and differ still, there is one consistent theme that runs throughout. Nearly all reports and studies agree that the Senate is an important democratic institution and that reform is needed to increase legitimacy in the context of a modern, democratic country. It is clear that while there may be different approaches to solving this problem, all parties agree that reform is necessary.

Senate reform of any kind has proven to be a complicated process. Under our Constitution, reforming fundamental aspects of the Senate, such as its powers or the representation of the provinces, requires the support of seven provinces representing 50% of the population of the provinces. Achieving the necessary level of provincial support for particular fundamental reforms is a complex and lengthy process with no guarantee of success.

Canadians do not want drawn out constitutional battles, battles that will detract from our government's focus on the top priority of Canadians, which is the economy. But a lack of agreement on large fundamental reform does not leave us with a lack of options if only we have the sufficient will to do so. If we are to begin the journey toward reform, we must do what we can within the scope of our authority in Parliament.

Our government believes that Senate reform is needed now, and we are committed to pursuing a practical, reasonable approach to reform that we believe will help restore effectiveness and legitimacy in the Senate. That is why we are moving forward with the Senate reform act.

Through the bill, our government is taking immediate and concrete action to fulfill our commitment to Canadians to increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of our upper chamber and to work co-operatively with the provinces and territories.

• (1215)

The Senate reform act includes two initiatives that would help bring the Senate into the 21st century.

First, the act provides a suggested framework to provinces and territories that wish to establish a democratic consultation process to give Canadians a say in who represents them in the Senate.

Second, it introduces term limits for senators appointed after October 2008, which would ensure that the Senate would be refreshed with new ideas on a regular basis.

While each of these initiatives can stand on their own merits, combining these measures allows our government to act quickly to implement our promise to Canadians to bring about reforms.

As I have already noted, our government has long been committed to Senate reform. Our commitment to reform remains as strong as ever, and we are now in a position to act on our commitment. We have consistently encouraged provinces and territories to implement a democratic process for the selection of Senate nominees. The Senate reform act will give clarity to our flexible approach.

The act would require the Prime Minister to consider the names of individuals selected from the holding of democratic processes with Canadians when making recommendations on appointments to the Governor General. The act would not bind the Prime Minister or the Governor General when making Senate appointments. Nor would it change the method of selecting senators.

Therefore, Parliament is able to enact this provision through its authority under section 44 of our Constitution. Under section 44 of the Constitution Act, 1982, Parliament has the legislative authority to amend the Constitution in relation to the Senate.

The act also contains a voluntary framework, attached as a schedule to the act, for provinces and territories to use as a basis for developing democratic selection process to consult voters on the preference of their Senate nominees. The framework is based on Alberta's Senatorial Selection Act. The framework is meant to provide enough details to facilitate the development of provincial or territorial legislation, without limiting provinces and territories in the establishment of a consultation process or in the precise details of such a process, which may differ between jurisdictions as local needs may demand.

This is, after all, a co-operative venture. Provinces and territories would not be required to implement the framework precisely as written. Rather, they would be encouraged to adapt the framework to best suit the needs of their unique circumstances.

It is our hope that this built-in flexibility will further encourage provinces to provide a democratic consultation process to give greater voice to their citizens and their provinces in the Senate.

Before moving on to explain other aspects of the bill, I would like to note that the approach proposed in the Senate reform act has already been successful and this type of reform has already gained a toehold in the Senate.

In 2007 the Prime Minister recommended the appointment of Bert Brown to the Senate. Senator Brown was chosen as a senator in waiting by Alberta voters in 2004 in a selection process held under the authority of Alberta's Senatorial Selection Act, which was introduced in 1989.

Senator Brown's tireless work on reform both inside and outside the Senate is greatly appreciated, not only by me and our government but also by the many Canadians who want Senate reform and who have campaigned for it for many years.

Alberta may have been the first province to pass this type of legislation and to see its nominees appointed, but it is not the only province that has taken steps to facilitate reform.

In 2009 Saskatchewan passed the Senate Nominee Election Act, which enables a provincial government to hold a consultation process on Senate nominees. Saskatchewan has not yet held a consultation process, but I encourage it to do so at the earliest opportunity. Our government continues to be welcoming toward discussion and co-operation wherever possible.

In British Columbia, the previous parliamentary secretary has introduced a bill that would provide the provincial government with the authority to hold consultation processes. I will be following the progress of the bill closely and would encourage my provincial colleagues in the British Columbia Legislative Assembly to support the passage of the bill.

More broadly, I would encourage our colleagues in all provincial and territorial legislatures and assemblies to consider supporting and moving forward with similar initiatives.

Let us move on to the other major initiatives of Bill C-7.

In addition to encouraging the implementation of democratic selection processes for Senate nominees, the act would also limit Senate terms, which can span several decades under the current rules. Polls have consistently shown that over 70% of Canadians support limiting the terms of senators. When we began to talk about specific reforms, that amount of support for one particular provision is impressive and encouraging.

● (1220)

Under the Senate reform act, senators appointed, after the bill receives royal assent, will be subject to a single nine-year non-renewable term. The nine-year term will also apply to all senators appointed after October 2008, up to royal assent. The nine-year clock for those senators will start upon royal assent.

As with the earlier provisions, limiting the terms of senators would amend the Constitution, but, again, it is a reform that can be accomplished by Parliament, through section 44 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Similarly, in 1965, Parliament acted alone to introduce mandatory retirement at age 75 for senators. Prior to that, senators were appointed for life.

Government Orders

As I have outlined, the Senate reform act presents practical, reasonable and achievable reforms within Parliament's authority. In order to do all that we can to ensure these reforms will be supported, our government has also consistently demonstrated our willingness to be flexible. We believe that we must work with our colleagues to ensure that change is achieved. Let me outline just a few examples.

Concerning the selection of Senate nominees, we have given discretion to the provinces and territories to develop their own consultation processes. As I noted, the Senate reform act includes a voluntary framework that is meant to provide a basis for the development of consultation processes. However, we have been clear that provinces and territories are not bound to the rules proposed in the framework.

For example, the framework proposes that consultations use an electoral system known as plurality at large, which is a version of our first-past-the-post electoral system applied to multi-member districts. Despite this, the Prime Minister has indicated that he is willing to consider the names of any nominee that is selected by voters in a democratic process. This means that provinces and territories are free to choose an electoral system that will ensure effective representation for their citizens and that will account for local or regional considerations as may be determined necessary.

Turning to term limits, our government has made a number of amendments to respond to comments made during previous examinations of this proposal.

One change was to increase the term limit from an eight-year term to a nine-year term. From the beginning, the Prime Minister was clear that he was willing to be flexible on the length of the term, as long as the principle of the bill, a truly limited term, was respected.

Our government decided to increase the term limit by one year in response to concerns that in the future, eight-year term limits could allow a two-term prime minister to appoint the entire Senate. In modifying the term limits, we are demonstrating our flexibility and desire to work with colleagues in order to ensure that this important reform is adopted.

I would note that this is not the only change we have made with respect to term limits. When the bill to first limit the terms of senators was first introduced in 2006, the bill allowed for senators to be reappointed for further terms and proposed elimination of the mandatory retirement age for senators. Following study of the bill, a number of concerns were raised that renewable terms could compromise the independence of the Senate, since senators might modify their behaviour to attempt to have their terms renewed by the government of the day. Therefore, our government responded to this concern and all subsequent versions of the bill have proposed a single term.

During its study of the bill, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs recommended that the mandatory retirement age of 75 be maintained. When the bill was reintroduced in the last Parliament, the mandatory retirement age for senators was retained, illustrating our willingness to listen to our Senate colleagues. The Senate reform act would keep the mandatory retirement age for senators.

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I raise these points because I want to be clear about our commitment to both change and flexibility. Our goal is to begin the reform process and we want to be as constructive as we can while ensuring we move forward.

I believe it is fair to say that, while many in this House agree that changes to the Senate are necessary, we sometimes disagree on the way forward.

In contrast to the position of the other parties, it is clear that our government's approach is the practical and reasonable way forward. It is the approach that can truly achieve results. In fact, the stated positions of the opposition parties are essentially arguments in favour of the status quo. Their proposals have such a low chance of success that they might as well not even propose them at all.

For example, the official opposition would try to abolish the Senate. This position is untenable for a number of reasons.

First, there is no consensus among the provinces to abolish the Senate. To take away the Senate, without significant other reforms, would be to seriously damage the effective representation of large sections of our country in our Parliament.

• (1225)

A second reason why this approach is undesirable is simply because Canadians do not support this idea. Polls have consistently shown that this proposal does not garner popular support. Our second chamber, though flawed, can serve valuable democratic functions if we can reform it to make it more effective and legitimate.

We should have enough respect for institutions and our democracy toward the implementation of an institution in need of repair.

The position of the Liberal Party, on the other hand, has been to advocate for a process, not a result. The Liberals do not support the reform of the Senate. Their 13-year record of inaction demonstrates their opposition. They have been clear about this. Yet their suggestion is to open the Constitution and begin a process that we know would end in a bitter, drawn-out national conflict, without Senate reforms being achieved. Their approach is a recipe for accomplishing nothing.

I reject Liberal obstructionism and encourage the them to join us in implementing constructive reforms that are reasonable and achievable.

Let us be clear. Our reforms are reasonable and achievable. They are absolutely within Parliament's authority to enact.

Our government is dedicated to reforming the Senate so that it better reflects the values of hard-working Canadians across the country. My constituents tell me that they want change. I believe that the time for change in the Senate has come.

With the Senate reform act, our government is presenting modest but important and attainable changes that would improve the Senate by providing it with greater legitimacy in the eyes of Canadians. I consider the enhancement of our democratic institutions a significant responsibility and I am privileged to be working with my hon. colleagues to meet this common objective.

I encourage all my colleagues to work toward achieving these reforms, giving Canadians a stronger voice in determining who represents them in the Senate.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my first comment for the minister would be this. Just because the government says that it will have reform, that does not make it good reform. We saw that with former Ontario Premier Mike Harris when he said that he would change the education system. The problem is that he made it worse. That is how we see this bill. It is reform, but it is bad reform. It takes us in the wrong direction.

My question is very straightforward. One of the key fundamental components of democracy is accountability. Given that no senator, under this law, is allowed to run for re-election, given the promises they make to get elected, how on earth are they ever held accountable for whether they kept those promises for the actions and the votes they did in office if the law prohibits them from being accountable? Where is the accountability?

• (1230)

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, first, it is obvious that the status quo in the Senate is unacceptable. Canadians have said this. Seven out of 10 believe it is unacceptable.

It is unfortunate. Although the NDP members talk about the reforms, they have not suggested any reforms that would be reasonable or practical, that could pass in this place and that would be a part of parliament's authority to move forward on. They have no ideas.

As for accountability in the Senate, the important thing is that the senators are not to be renewed. There would be one nine-year term limit. This would ensure that senators could not rely on a government to reappoint them. They could act independently, do their studies independently, they can speak independently and not have to rely upon a prime minister or a government to reappoint them. That is accountability.

Also, as term limits are over in nine years, this would continuously bring new and fresh ideas and new people in to the Senate, which is important.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, up to now, the minister's co-operation with the opposition has been very good. I want him for that. He should be an example for many of his colleagues and the staff of the government.

On the contents, though, we have, for now at least, a very deep disagreement.

First, section 42(1)(b) of our Constitution states that changing the method of selecting senators requires a 7/50 formula. The title of the bill is, "An Act respecting the selection of senators", so it is clearly an unconstitutional bill if it is done only by Parliament.

However, in relation to it, I would like to ask the minister this. Why is he willing to penalize his province this way? The very moment the Senate will be elected, since his province has only six senators, while New Brunswick, for example, has ten senators, it will be terribly powerful and unfair for the province of Alberta and the province of British Columbia. Why is he penalizing the west this way?

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Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, the member talked about the constitutionality of the Senate selection process. It actually does not change the Senate selection process. We are asking the provinces to provide nominees. The Prime Minister would consider those nominees in making recommendations to the Governor General. That process will not change.

Under section 44 of the Constitution, these Senate reforms are completely within Parliament's authority to do. I will give two examples. The Liberals, in 1965, changed the lifetime term limit for senators to a term ending when a senator turned 75 years old.

Currently, Senator Brown has been selected in this way. There are precedents for both reforms in the Senate reform act.

As for changing the number of seats, the hon. member well knows that would require us to open up the Constitution. Canadians do not want a long drawn out constitutional battle. They want us to focus on the economy and keeping the streets safe.

We have an opportunity to move forward and make some reforms that would bring the upper chamber into a 21st century democracy. By stalling and requiring us to open up the Constitution, the Liberals are just standing for the status quo in the Senate.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, in his speech my colleague had thoughtful comments and ideas about Senate reform.

He mentioned that over 70% of Canadians wished to have reform and flexibility. It is unfortunate that our colleagues across the aisle do not wish to have that degree of flexibility and opportunity for Canadians to bring forward a more robust democracy.

I would ask the minister about the great ideas and responses that he is hearing from Canadians and which need to be implemented.

• (1235)

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, it is important to listen to Canadians and to have a sense of what they are saying about the Senate. I had an opportunity this summer to travel from coast to coast to coast and listen to what Canadians are saying about the Senate. We are hearing over and over that the status quo in the Senate is not acceptable and that things must change.

Senators can serve terms of up to 45 years and they do not have a democratic mandate from Canadians.

Canadians want steps taken to have reasonable reforms to bring the Senate into a 21st century democracy.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the minister for his speech. I would like to ask him a question.

The bill preamble states: "whereas Parliament wishes to maintain the essential characteristics of the Senate within Canada's parliamentary democracy as a chamber of independent, sober second thought".

Given that elections would make the Senate even more partisan, I am trying to understand how this reform could maintain the Senate as a chamber of independent thought.

[English]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely important that the Senate continue to have its independence to freely do its studies and not be reliant upon the government for renewal or reappointment at any time. That is why we have proposed a non-renewable nine-year term. Senators would have the opportunity to be independent from the government.

We have changed the term from eight years to nine years so that a two-term prime minister could not appoint the entire Senate. A nine-year term is long enough for senators to learn the job and gain the necessary experience. It is also a reasonable amount of time to have new thoughts and new people who could add their perspectives as well.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the dubious distinction of being the author of the first bill in the history of Canada to be killed in the Senate without debate or consideration or being sent to committee. It was a very distressing and difficult day when that bill which was passed after due diligence in the House was killed in the Senate.

Why do we not get serious about Senate reform and simply do away with this useless appendage to a dysfunctional government?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the member is not completely jumping for joy regarding Senate reform. He said that he has concerns about the Senate. That is why we are bringing forward these reforms. Senators elected in their provinces by Canadians who are being represented by them in the Senate would be more accountable to Canadians and voters in their provinces. That is why we prefer to reform the Senate. It is an important institution of Parliament. It is important that we try to make it better, make it more legitimate and democratic so it can serve the purpose that we believe it should.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill. Let me say at the outset that my first reaction to the notion of electing a Senate was probably not unlike that of many Canadians. We have an unelected appointed Senate, we have abolition and then there is election. The Canadian character being what it is, of not wanting the status quo and looking at abolition as maybe too radical, the comfort zone is that election, the bowl of porridge in the middle, is the way to go.

The reality is that the most radical thing we could do in this country is elect the Senate, give it a mandate and create the kind of gridlock we see in the U.S. That is radical. Long before we go down that road, we should be asking Canadians whether they even want a Senate, yes or no. That will tell us what the mandate of the country is rather than just our deciding that we know best in terms of constructing our Parliament.

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I also want to indicate that I have some criticisms of the Senate as an institution, but none of my remarks are meant to reflect on individual senators. In fact, I have the greatest regard and respect for most of the senators that I work with. An example of a great Canadian currently in the Senate is a woman from Saskatchewan. I have spoken about her before. She is a fantastic Canadian who does an excellent job. The only problem is there is no mandate or right in that place to pass judgment on laws. We should be using people like them for the betterment of Canada but we ought to be using them in way where we ask them to do specific work and not necessarily be a part of the law-making process. My comments are not about individual senators, and I say again that I have the greatest and utmost respect for most of them.

Let us recall the history of the Senate and how we got here. This originated back in the British Parliament. It was the House of Lords. The whole purpose was to control all the commoners who were starting to get some rights. As the Magna Carta started to take hold, ordinary commoners like us suddenly had a say in the governing of their country. Therefore, the House of Lords was created to make sure that the unwashed masses did not run amok and screw things up for people who were doing quite well in that country and got more than their share of the cream that the country produced. Even the current Prime Minister has said the Senate is a relic of the 19th century.

I will use my words to describe this bill and I am going to comment on each aspect as I go along. It is radical, dangerous, undemocratic, misleading, and not at all what Canadians need.

Hon. John Baird: Tell us where you stand.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I am so glad the Minister of Foreign Affairs has joined us. It means we are going to have a very entertaining afternoon. It reminds me of the good old days back in the Ontario legislature. I am glad the minister is here and I am looking forward to the next half hour or so.

I said that it is radical. To me, this is arguably the most important aspect of what we are debating. If we elect the Senate, we would radically change Parliament. I said that just now, but who else said that? The Supreme Court in 1980 said, "The substitution of a system of election for a system of appointment would involve a radical change in the nature of one of the component parts of Parliament".

The Supreme Court said that this is radical. It is not usually known for knee-jerk reactions and going over the top. It is certainly not known as being hard right or hard left. It just looks at the facts. It sees that this is radical, and it is, because if we abolished the Senate and brought proportional representation to this House, we would be more than adequately equipped to govern the 35 million people in this country. The provinces proved this when they abolished their senators.

● (1240)

One of the reasons it is radical is that the Senate killed my colleague's Bill C-311, a bill which passed this House at least twice, and the Senate had no right. Every member of the House, right, wrong or indifferent, has a mandate to be here and to vote and pass judgment on laws. Senators do not. They do not have a moral,

ethical mandate; a constitutional one, yes; a moral and ethical one, no. Is that democratic? Certainly not.

If we elected the Senate and Bill C-311 passed this House again, what would happen over there? The Senate would kill it again, only now the senators would be all puffed up and would say, "We have an electoral mandate to do this. Yes, the House of Commons passed it, and yes they are elected members, and they have the mandate and the trust of the people who elected them, but so do we. We are not with the party in the House; we are with a different party and therefore we will do things differently. One of the things we will do is stop any kind of progressive legislation that actually protects the environment in this country."

If we want to see where we are heading in terms of a radical proposal that is also dangerous for us as Canadians, we only need look at what happened recently in the U.S. Congress. There was a piece of legislation on the debt limit that members had to pass in order to borrow money to keep the economy going. Normally it is a routine thing. It passed under President Reagan umpteen times, no big deal. Because of the partisan split where the House of Representatives is Republican controlled and the Senate is democratically controlled, all the interests of the American people seemed to be set aside as the two parties fought each other to the brink of a crisis. It put the world on alert for a financial crisis because the two houses have their own independent mandate.

Is that what we want? Do we really need to complicate the process of governing more? Do we need to spend more money? That place already costs almost \$100 million a year. Think of what we could do with that \$100 million promoting our own democracy.

The other reason it is dangerous is that the house that would be created would be like the house of Frankenstein, and no one should take that personally. There would be people who would serve until age 75. Under this legislation there would be some people who would serve for nine years and some people who promised to serve only eight years who would get a free bonus year. Then there would be some provinces that elect people and some that would not. There are some provinces that believe, like us in the official opposition, that we ought to abolish the Senate, so they would not elect anyone. We must think about it. It would be like the bar scene from *Star Wars* over there. Never mind the gridlock between us, they would be gridlocked over there. Trying to get anything out of that house would be a serious challenge.

The last reason it is dangerous is that it gives the impression we are making things better. I mentioned that the former premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, used the same technique as we are seeing here. The minister in one of his opening remarks said, "I'm bringing reform". By virtue of that we are all supposed to say it is wonderful and thank him for the reform, but as we saw with Mike Harris, just because it is reform does not make it good reform.

Hon. John Baird: Don't yell.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, my friend, the foreign affairs minister woke up again and realizes we may be getting into some interesting areas.

The change that was brought in Ontario was a nightmare for our education system. We are still trying to get out of the mess that the change brought us. This reform is the same thing. Yes, it is reform, but it is not good reform; in fact it is very bad reform. One of the reasons it is bad is that it is so undemocratic.

● (1245)

I asked the minister what I thought was a reasonable question about accountability, one of the major tenets of democracy. I said that, when we run for office, we all make promises. At the end of our term, we go back to our constituents and we ask them how we did. We ask if they were satisfied with the representation we gave them or if they want to fire us and hire someone else. We put ourselves out there publicly and the people pass their judgment. That is accountability. Just the fact that someone is elected does not make it a democratic process unless they are held accountable.

The senators will run on promises, get elected, serve nine years and then leave. There is no accountability. By law, they cannot run again, so how can they be held accountable. They will be elected on promises and the other half of a promise in a democracy is to be held to account for it. I am held to account for every word I speak, every vote I cast and every action I take. I am held accountable. I have a constituency office where people can reach me.

Elected senators will not be accountable. They cannot be by law. It is crazy to call this democratic when they will not be held to account because the law prevents it. That is what we are heading into.

It is also undemocratic because of what the Prime Minister said. It is a cute little technique. I am not a lawyer so I do not know if it will pass constitutional muster. However, what he is doing is maintaining the Constitution that says that the Prime Minister appoints senators. He is leaving that in place and all this sort of rests below it. It is the process that leads to a list of names that are put in front of the Prime Minister.

I think there is at least a constitutional argument that they are okay but it does not deal with the democratic deficit that is in this bill. The Prime Minister does not need to appoint those people.

Some would ask how a prime minister of the day could ever say no to an elected Senator from any province. That is a good question, a fair question. Might I also pose: Who would ever think that a prime minister in the same Parliament that he passed a fixed election date law would violate his own law in the same Parliament?

It is quite possible that we could see a political situation where a party that is in government in a province is a real thorn in the side of the government of the day. I will use the present government as an example. It elects some people and one person it elects is somebody who is very loud, very opinionated and who will not shut up when people want him to. The prime minister looks at that and asks himself or herself if he or she really wants to bring this problem into his or her back yard.

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There is no guarantee that the democratic choice of the people will be honoured. Therefore, how can one call it democratic?

I would also mention that, under what is being proposed, all the costs get pushed to the provinces. In some situations it might get pushed to the municipalities, believe it or not. In these economic times, does anyone really think the provinces look at the federal government with any kind of affection when it is handing them more things to pay for that the provinces already cannot afford?

The federal government should at least have the decency to pay for its own bill. These people will be federal parliamentarians, so why are they not paid at the federal level? It is misleading. Everything about the Senate is misleading.

One of the things the minister talked about, and I am not quoting so I stand to be corrected, was the important regional representation and interest that the Senate does and can provide. I do not think I am too far off there.

We need to remember that the cover story when the Senate was created was not to keep an eye on the unwashed masses who were suddenly being thrown into the House of Commons. No. The cover story was that these would be regional representatives. They would represent the regions and the provinces of this vast country. We are the second biggest land mass country in the world with a relatively small population.

The cover story for the Senate was that we needed them there, that we would deal with the riding issues and local issues and the Senate would deal with the regional issues and protect the provinces' interests.

● (1250)

It did not turn out that way, not for one second. First, any thought of sober second thought is a joke. The Senate has House leaders and whips, and opposition leaders and whips. Why does it need whips if it has independence? Many senators attend caucus meetings. The whip of the official opposition is a very good fellow but that does not change my argument one bit. That good fellow should get elected and come here, not stay over there. That is a good idea.

The premiers have some strong opinions about these things. It is interesting to note that Premier Wall from Saskatchewan fears that he knows the answer. Earlier this year, when he was asked about the elected Senate, he said:

I think we could get a little bit more enthused even about the whole thing if it became clear that this was not about just an expanded parliamentary caucus for existing parties.

Is that not an interesting quote?

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I have a letter from a certain elected senator, whose name I shall not mention, dated June 15 of this year, addressed to members of the CPC Senate caucus. Where do the sober second thought caucus people meet? He said:

Dear Senators,

Yesterday, in Senate caucus Minister...[for Democratic Reform] was showered with complaints about Senate elections and a nine year term.

The last paragraph is the key, and this is the issue about whether the Senate represents the regions or whether it represents caucus interests. It reads:

Every senator in this caucus needs to decide where their loyalty should be and must be. The answer is simple; our loyalty is with the man who brought us here, the man who has wanted Senate reform since he entered politics, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper.

That senator's priority was to be loyal to the Prime Minister, not his region and not his province. Abolish the Senate. This is a bad idea.

• (1255)

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind all members, as this debate heats up, that it is the custom in the House not to mention the name of sitting members. I trust all members will continue to direct their comments through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech with great interest and I picked up on two things from it.

First, he agrees with us that there needs to be some type of Senate reform, that we need to make some changes to the Senate. He does not agree with the way it is today, the status quo. Canadians agree with us, so that is what this government is doing.

The other thing that I picked up on is the fact that he has no ideas. NDP members do not have any ideas. They have nothing constructive to provide to us. The only idea they really have is to abolish the Senate. I am sure my colleague knows that would require a constitutional battle. It would open up the Constitution.

Does the member really believe that drawn out constitutional battles is the way to go, is what the government should spend its time on, or should we move forward with Senate reforms that are reasonable, measured and within Parliament's authority to do?

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, the minister said that we support some changes. No, not really. We just want to get rid of the darn thing.

The minister also said that Canadians agree with his government and then went on to talk about the bill.

The minister also said that we were not proposing anything. We proposed two things. We did it in the last Parliament, we will do it in this Parliament and we will keep doing it until we are government and can make these changes. We proposed a referendum asking the Canadian people if they want a Senate, yes or no. We also proposed bringing proportional representation to that place and making it truly democratic.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, would my colleague agree that because Canada

is a federation, if there is a provision in the Constitution that says that if a fundamental change is made to the Senate that means it would affect not only Parliament but the legislative assemblies of the provinces and the country as a whole? A bill like this will surely be considered unconstitutional if it is supported by Parliament.

Would he also not agree that all the provinces would be affected, but that the minister's province of Alberta and the province of British Columbia would be terribly affected since they are so under-represented in the Senate?

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I would need to look carefully, but I pretty much agree with everything the member had to say. Whether or not it ends up being unconstitutional, my colleague should make no mistake that Quebec will send this to the Supreme Court of Canada, as will some of the other provinces.

The government knows that this bill will never see the light of day in terms of being law. This is a big political charade meant to look like the government is doing something while knowing that nothing will happen. What really hurts is that if it ever actually did, it would hurt our Parliament and our ability to govern ourselves in the most democratic way.

• (1300)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton Centre for his fiery speech and the way he stood up for so many Canadians who supported the New Democratic Party. Many of them refer to our position on the abolishment of the Senate, the way we speak out for them and the position we bring forward to the House of Commons as the key reasons for supporting us.

The member talked about the nature and history of the Senate. The actual structure of the Senate is a relic of our past. For example, I could not be in the Senate because I am under the age of 30. Almost 20 NDP members of Parliament are under the age of 30 and they could not be in the Senate.

If the Senate is supposed to be an institution that represents the Canadian people, is it not inherently discriminatory? Is it not against the democratic right of Canadians to elect whomever they want to represent them, including young people whose voices need to be heard in this Parliament?

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, it is amazing that in this day and age it is quite all right for that highly competent MP to represent her constituents here in the House of Commons but, by law, cannot go to that other place. This is one more example of how dumb the whole thing is.

If we were to bring in proportional representation, we would have the ability to ensure that more segments of our population are represented here. As much as each party tries, the House is still not representative of the Canadian people demographically. We have a lot of work to do in this House but the first step is getting rid of that House.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to address the colourful reference the hon. member made to Frankenstein's monster. He said that we would have a variety of different kinds of mandates, and that when members of the House are elected with different kinds of mandates, we would have different kinds of responsibilities, which would lead to a dog's breakfast of Frankenstein's monster.

I could tell that he felt strongly about it because his voice went up an octave when he did it and I heard a wine glass shattering somewhere.

He favours proportional representation, the multi-member proportional system for the House of Commons. Under that system, some members came from a party list and some were elected from individual ridings.

Given that he feels so strongly that different kinds of mandates lead to this kind of Frankenstein's monster, why is he advocating turning this House into a Frankenstein's monster and removing all checks and balances and giving it complete control over the affairs of the country? That seems inherently incompatible with his statements about mixed mandates in the Senate.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I knew when the hon. member got up it would be a thoughtful, intelligent question and probably a little tough. It was all of those things.

I stand by what I said. I am disappointed that it was wine glasses I shattered; I would rather it would be busted beer bottles, but that is just because I am from Hamilton.

I understand the question. I would just say that the Frankenstein, to use that reference, was because of the cherry-picking, all these different ideas and different pieces that do not fit together.

The notion of proportional representation does contain the element that the member says, but let us understand that this is only one model of proportional representation. We have not said anything about a particular model being cast in stone; we just think we ought to start a dialogue with Canadians about what kind of proportional representation model we should adopt to bring into the House.

The second thing is that most of the models are well established. In reality, we are very far behind in terms of democracy. We think of ourselves as a mature modern democracy, and we are in so many ways, but with that Senate over there, we are not.

Proportional representation is about as mainstream as it can get in Europe and many other countries. The fundamental aspect that some people have a direct election and some are on a list is an issue, but it is a systemic issue that is built into a model that has been tested and used in many countries around the world, whereas this hybrid monster really is not anything.

We will have senators over there fighting among themselves over all kinds of issues. As I said, that is a gridlock in and of itself, and that is before we even get to the point of the gridlock that happens here.

My friend from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville raised this point, and I want to give him credit for it: if we do get into the gridlock that the Americans have, the Americans at least have a mechanism, the

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conference committee, to deal with it in some way. We do not have one. We have no ability to deal with the gridlock that exists between two elected houses.

Not only is this a bad idea, it is not even well thought out.

• (1305)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is completely right to raise the issue of the danger of a gridlock and blockages and so on.

At a time when the economy is doing so badly and the United States situation is so awful, how can the government claim that they care so much about the economy, and that it is a priority, when it is planning to create a stalemate here in the Parliament of Canada?

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I suspect, based on the question he is asking, that the government thinks it is a fine idea because it controls the Senate right now. If it did not control the House under the current system, it would still control the Senate, so it probably does not give much of a darn.

It works for the Conservatives the way it is now. These plans will work for them. Everything works for them. The problem is that the bill does not work for Canadians.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party does not oppose Senate reform, but it must be done right and in accordance with the Constitution.

There are three reasons the Liberal opposition cannot support the bill.

First, it is the conviction of the Liberal opposition that such an act would be unconstitutional. The fundamental changes it proposes cannot be implemented by Parliament alone. These changes would require the support of at least seven provinces, representing 50% of the Canadian population, notably because appointing senators through a patchwork of voluntary provincial senatorial elections is clearly a fundamental change; limiting the senators' tenure to nine years is a significant change; and giving the Prime Minister the power to name the totality of senators at the end of two mandates of four and a half years would strengthen his power considerably, another significant change.

Second, such an act would be against the interests of two of our provinces, Alberta and British Columbia. Here is why: practically speaking, an elected upper chamber would carry more weight in its dealings with the House of Commons than it does in its present form. The problem is that both western provinces are better represented in the House than they are in the Senate, and both provinces have only six senators, while some provinces have 10 with a population four or six times smaller.

Third, such an act could provoke frequent blockages in Parliament in the absence of a constitutional mechanism to resolve any conflicts that might arise between an elected House of Commons and an elected Senate.

For those three reasons, we propose that the government abandon this bill, or at least refer it to the Supreme Court to verify its constitutionality.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

I would like to elaborate on each of these three objections, which have led the Liberal opposition to determine that this bill is not in the interest of Canadians. One issue is that if this bill becomes law, we will have to expect arguments that would pit one elected chamber against the other elected chamber, creating delays and roadblocks in Parliament. Just think of the frequent intercameral paralysis experienced by our neighbours to the south.

In fact, the situation could be even worse here than in the United States, because Canada does not have a constitutional mechanism to bridge the gaps between two elected chambers. Both could claim the same legitimacy and claim to speak for the people.

What is the government thinking? What does the minister have in mind? Does he really want to bring the same paralysis we see in the United States or in Mexico here to Canada? Do we not have enough challenges here in Canada without thoughtlessly burdening our decision-making process?

This seems like a very bad idea, especially when we consider that Canada is a decentralized federation with 11 governments—14 including the territories—that have important powers and responsibilities. In such a decentralized federation, it is important that federal institutions, common to all citizens, work well and quickly, before drafting legislation or making decisions that may or may not be popular, but that at least are not constrained by the ritual opposition of two elected chambers, an opposition that would be exacerbated by the absence of a constitutional dispute resolution mechanism.

It is important to realize that the government's muddled plan would have senators appointed through a patchwork system of optional provincial elections. Funding for these federal elections would come from the provinces, and even though they would be federal elections, the federal parties would be excluded from the electoral process. The provincial parties would control these federal elections. What a mess.

It is not surprising that a number of provincial governments have said they are not planning to put up funds for these federal elections. This bill is the antithesis of common sense and it is unconstitutional to boot. If this bill passes, the resulting legislation would be declared unconstitutional because the fundamental changes it would cause could not be implemented by Parliament alone. These changes could only be made with the support of at least seven provinces representing 50% of the Canadian population. This unilateral initiative is another manifestation of the Prime Minister's style of government: controlling and centralizing. This attitude shows disrespect for the provinces and a lack of understanding of what Canadian federalism is.

● (1310)

[English]

Indeed, many of the provinces have said that they believe this proposal is not something that can be done unilaterally. They believe they should be involved, and they want to be involved in these proposed Senate reforms. In other words, it is not just we who are saying the federal government cannot do this alone: the provinces say that, and they want a voice.

Wrong for the whole of Canada, this bill is especially ill-conceived for the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. We are far from being alone in saying that. Both British Columbia Premier Christy Clark and former Alberta Premier Don Getty rightly point out that this version of Senate reform would be bad for their respective provinces. As the *Edmonton Journal* wrote, “second thoughts” must be given to this plan.

Let us look at the numbers. Alberta has 9.1% of the total number of members of Parliament, but only 5.7% of the senators. The gap is even larger for British Columbia, with 11.7% of the members in the House of Commons and only 5.7% of the members of the Senate. Let us compare these provinces with New Brunswick, which counts 10 senators for a population 4.8 times smaller than Alberta's and 6.1 times smaller than British Columbia's.

This unbalanced distribution of Senate seats, an historical artifact, is a problem for the two western provinces and an anomaly for our federation. The government's reform would make the situation much worse.

In the existing unelected Senate, this problem is mitigated by the fact that our senators play the constitutional role with moderation, letting the elected House of Commons have the final word most of the time. However, in an elected Senate, with members able to invoke as much democratic legitimacy as their House counterparts—if not more, since they would represent provinces rather than ridings—the under-representation of British Columbia and Alberta would take on its full scope and significance.

Of course, elected senators from the other provinces would not be hostile to the interests of Alberta and British Columbia, their duty being to address the interests of the whole country, but these senators would be more familiar with, and closer to, the interests of the voters of the province where they were elected.

Premier Charest has already announced that his government will challenge the constitutionality of this unilateral Senate reform in the courts. Premiers Stelmach and Clark will serve the interests of their provinces well if they join their Quebec colleague in this court action.

Do Canadians need and want the waste of time, effort, money and goodwill that the government's initiative would cause? I think not. It is time for the Prime Minister, a Calgarian, and the Minister of Democratic Reform, an Edmontonian, to give this issue a second sober thought and abandon this ill-advised and ill-conceived Senate reform plan, an ill-advised and problem-fraught plan for Alberta, British Columbia and the whole of Canada in English *et en français*.

● (1315)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has indicated that regional unfairness is an issue. I am notorious in my own party as a supporter of greater equality between members in selecting our leaders, so I have natural sympathy with that.

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However, I wonder if he really supports what he is saying. He is quite right that there are 10 senators each for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick—actually, there are 12 each. There are four senators for Prince Edward Island, which results from the fact that because of another provision of our Constitution, Prince Edward Island has a minimum number of MPs, causing the average riding in P.E.I. to be about one-third the size of a riding in Ontario, and so on.

Is he in favour of eliminating all these things? Would he be willing to start, for example, by doing something that I personally do not support, which is cutting the number of senators for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia down to six, or perhaps fewer, in order to have some kind of population balance with British Columbia and Alberta?

If he is not, or if he is not willing to suggest an amendment that would lead to the opposite conclusion, then I suggest he is just coming up with these objections as a way of trying to prevent any progress from being made and is repeating the old Liberal line that until we have perfect reform, which is unachievable, we should have no reform at all and stick to an appointed Senate, which in due course would be appointed by Liberal governments based on Liberal partisans as it was in the past.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, it is true that in Canada there is no agreement about the number of senators each province should have and it is a problem for two provinces that are very underrepresented. But why make this problem worse and significantly worse by the reform my colleague and his party are proposing today?

Between 1945 and today the Senate rejected only seven bills from the House. So the Senate has been quite prudent and reserved about its own role. Imagine if they were elected? Do members think there would only be seven bills during half a century that would be stuck by an elected Senate? No, it would be daily life, it would do it all the time. Only six Albertans would be there to make their mind known. It would be terribly unfair. I care about each province in my country and it is why I am clearly against the bill.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for an excellent speech and an excellent analysis. I particularly enjoyed the analysis because it comes from a respected academic perspective which is about the antithesis of everything that I bring to it with a grade nine education, but I do have an experiential viewpoint from 26 years of being elected at all three orders of government. That is why my question is about accountability.

From my limited academic point of view, it looks to me like there is no room for accountability. I asked the minister as my first question, where is the accountability given the importance of that in a democracy and the minister either could not, or would not articulate an answer.

I would ask my colleague, have I missed something? Is there an element of accountability that I am not seeing, or is it clearly missing from this reform bill?

• (1320)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to say that I understand the appetite for having members of Parliament and senators elected in a democracy. I understand that and it is popular in Canada. The second step is how can we do it in a

way that will help the country and every region of the country. The way the minister wants to do this will be awful. It would create stalemates. It will paralyze us. It will not create better policy-making, to the contrary, and it will accentuate this proportion of unfairness for some regions of our country, especially Alberta and British Columbia.

By definition, I am not saying it is wrong to have elected senators. I am saying it is wrong to do it this way for everyone.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's knowledgeable speech on this. I am from one of the most affected provinces, British Columbia, so I would like to pose to my colleague this question. Could he give us a greater idea and more details about the kind of inequities that would be placed on the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta by this Conservative government proposal?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, on every bill in the Senate, British Columbia and Alberta would be very underrepresented and in any democracy that I know of, to be underrepresented is bad news. Today it is a problem, but it is manageable because the Senate at the end of the day almost always gives the last word to the House.

British Columbia and Alberta are much better represented and we will work on some things that will make their representation even better in the House in the coming weeks, but not in the Senate. In the Senate it cannot be changed and the minister did not answer my question. He said that the distribution of senators by province cannot be changed other than by the Constitution. I agree with him. So that means that forever British Columbia and Alberta will be terribly underrepresented in one of the two elected chambers of this country. Is that really what he wants for his province?

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is curious that the minister is not taking the opportunity to ask my colleague some questions with respect to what I would regard as a very thoughtful speech and a detailed deconstruction of what is clearly a flawed bill.

We have seen some pretty awful situations in the United States recently with constitutional and political gridlock between two houses which are elected. As others have said, there is a conference mechanism wherein people of goodwill can in effect work out their differences.

It seems to me that one of the core points the hon. member raises in his speech is the institutionalization of gridlock between the two houses. As I think about what he has elucidated, I think he is right. I am curious as to how the hon. member sees that happening over time as each develops its own culture.

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Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, it is a big concern for me. Canada is a complex country to govern, and friends in the Conservative Party are realizing that more and more. It is a huge country, very decentralized. There is little that Ottawa can do alone without at least consulting the provinces. Also the aboriginal people have to have their say.

Why add an even more complex situation when the common institution of the country, the Parliament of Canada will, most of the time, like in the United States, be blocked by partisan differences between the two elected houses, the two elected chambers?

I think it is ill-advised to do so. We should at least have a long debate. I would urge the minister to ensure to have hearings. Many experts will come and explain to the minister how dangerous this bill is for Canada.

• (1325)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, 70% of Canadians have said that they want some form of reform. I would just like to ask, does the member opposite really want a constitutional quagmire? That is what he is proposing.

Canadians want action. They elected a strong, stable, Conservative government to create reform. We are moving forward with that. Why does the member opposite want to put us in a constitutional quagmire?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, in fact, it is the bill that will create the quagmire. The hon. member must understand that.

Alberta and British Columbia will see that on every bill they will be so unfairly represented that they will request a constitutional change to be sure that they will have their fair share. It will be completely understandable.

As the member well knows, there will not be one politician in Quebec or Ontario who will be willing to change that. So we will have the quagmire that the member is speaking about, and it is what I do not want. I am sure she does not want it either. So the member should say no to this bill.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had come with the intention of giving a fairly dry speech full of historical references. I am a comparative historian, so I was going to make all kinds of comparisons to other countries, but I have heard so many things today that just do not seem to bear with what I would consider to be the facts. So I thought I would, instead, turn my attention to responding to some of the, I am sure, sincerely meant but completely incorrect statements made by some of my colleagues today.

I want to start with the completely erroneous and baseless statement that this amendment would represent some kind of unconstitutional change to our Constitution. Let me start with that.

First, I should draw the attention of members to the fact that the bill contains two parts. Part of the bill is an ordinary piece of legislation that deals with the subject of how senators would be elected using the advisory election process. That process then causes individuals' names to be submitted to the Prime Minister. I will read

that part of the bill, if I could. It is very brief. Part 1, clause 3 of the bill states:

If a province or territory has enacted legislation that is substantially in accordance with the framework set out in the schedule, the Prime Minister, in recommending Senate nominees to the Governor General, must consider names from the most current list of Senate nominees selected for that province or territory.

There is then a schedule that outlines what the rules would be for such an election to qualify the individual to be treated in that manner by the Prime Minister.

Part 2 of the bill is actually an amendment to the Constitution of Canada. My colleague from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville made a reference to unconstitutionality and he can correct me if I have misunderstood what he was asserting, but I believe he was referring to Part 2 of the legislation. On that basis, I will now turn to dealing with any objections to constitutionality that he may believe exist.

I should first correct something he said. He said that the changes to the Senate are governed by subsection 42(1), the amending formula, of the Constitution Act and that is only partly true. I have subsection 42(1) with me and it reads as follows:

An amendment to the Constitution of Canada in relation to the following matters may be made only in accordance with subsection 38(1)—

Subsection 38(1) is the 7-50 formula.

Paragraph (b) of subsection 42(1) states, “the powers of the Senate and the method of selecting Senators”. That is the paragraph he referred to. Paragraph (c) says, “the number of members by which a province is entitled to be represented in the Senate and the residence qualifications of Senators”. These two things require the 7-50 formula. Seven provinces with half the population must approve it or it cannot go forward. This is the kind of discussion that tends to lead to constitutional quagmires.

By contrast, section 44 of the Constitution Act, 1982 is the amending formula. Our Constitution has five amending formulae for different parts of our Constitution. Section 44 says, “Subject to sections 41 and 42, Parliament may exclusively make laws amending the Constitution of Canada in relation to the executive government of Canada or the Senate and House of Commons”. The question is: Does this proposed change fall under section 44 or is it not in fact under that section and, therefore, does it fall back under the 7-50 amending formula? The answer to that is it does, indeed, fall under section 44. This is established law.

Section 44 is the governing formula because of the fact that it is the replacement for another section that allowed the Parliament of Canada to make amendments exclusively in certain areas. There is widespread acceptance that section 44 is the replacement for the subsection 91(1) amending formula that was put in place for Canada in 1949.

• (1330)

That formula read that, “It shall be lawful for the Queen, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate and House of Commons, to make laws” dealing with the following classes of subjects:

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The amendment from time to time of the Constitution of Canada, except as regards matters coming within the classes of subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the provinces, or as regards rights or privileges by this or any other Constitutional Act granted or secured to the Legislature or the Government of a province, or to any class of persons with respect to schools or as regards the use of the English or the French language or as regards the requirements that there shall be a session of the Parliament...at [least] once [every] year, and that no House of Commons shall continue for more than five years from the [date] of the return of the Writs for choosing the House....

The subsection 91.1 formula was used in 1965 by the Pearson government and the Parliament at the time to change the Constitution, causing senators to no longer be elected for life, but rather to be elected until age 75.

There are the precedents for doing it this way.

I want to take a few moments to mention some other considerations here.

The practice of having a section 44 amendment, that is an amendment to the Constitution authorized under section 44 of the Constitution contained in a piece of legislation, a bill dealing with ordinary legislative matters in one part and then with an amendment to the Constitution in the other part of the same bill, is an established practice. It has done been a number of times. I would point, in particular, to the act passed in 1999 that created the territory of Nunavut. That act contained some ordinary legislation and also an amendment, an amendment that dealt with the Senate of Canada because it awarded a senator to the territory of Nunavut.

Therefore, the established practice of doing things in this manner, as authorized by this section of the Constitution, has existed for no small amount of time, it is well-precedented and there is considerable scholarship to back up the assertion that the subsection 91.1 amending formula is the parent of the section 44 amending formula.

I turn now to some other issues that were raised in the earlier debate.

I mentioned my frustration with the argument that we cannot engage in piecemeal reform, that we must engage only in a complete reform. I think this leads to a constitutional quagmire. The perfect becomes the enemy of the good and we achieve no change whatsoever. That is a very strong reason for opposing the arguments made by the hon. for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

I want to mention in particular that we do deal in this bill with some very significant points. We do not deal with the issue of regional fairness. That is quite true. We do deal with the election versus appointment issue. Members would be, in a formal sense, appointed by the Governor General, and the Governor General's powers are very carefully protected under the text of this bill. However, nonetheless, a *de facto* election takes place. On the term length of senators, they cannot be appointed at age 40 and serve for 35 years. That is also dealt with.

As for regional fairness, and this is always a vexed question, it is in the nature of upper houses to tend to not reflect representation by population or the principle of one person, one vote; one vote, one weight and therefore that presumably justifies some inequality. I think the inequality in our current upper house is excessive. On the other hand, to argue that therefore we must ensure that the upper house is powerless is to say that we must eviscerate one of the basic

concepts of federalism because of the assumed belief that, as the member said, no politicians in Ontario or Quebec would support a change to correct that unfairness of representation. That would be a very wrong thing.

Remember, every long-standing federation in the world, every successful federation in the world, has an independent upper house, which is based, at least to some degree, on considerations other than representation by population. There are two senators per state in the United States. In Australia it was originally six per state, then eventually 12 per state. It of course have only six states. In the upper house in Switzerland, there are two per canton. There are some what they call half-cantons, such as Appenzell Innerrhoden and Appenzell Ausserrhoden, which get one senator each, but everybody else gets two. Germany has a somewhat different system but, again, it is not based on representation by population. There is some over-representation for the smaller *länders*.

● (1335)

The idea of having some kind of equality is there. We could work towards a more principled kind of equality. I really think there is sufficient good will. However, we should not halt any progress because we are searching for perfection on that point.

Let me deal with something else on the same subject. The idea that the upper house ought to be kept effectively illegitimate so it cannot second guess the lower house, leads logically toward the NDP position to abolish the upper house rather than to the position taken by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

We have to be realistic about this. The upper house cannot be abolished without a 7/50 amendment, without 7 provinces with half the population agreeing to that amendment. The chances of getting that kind of success—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Unanimity of provinces. It is unanimity.

Mr. Scott Reid: I just heard the member say “unanimity”, and he may well be right. I may be incorrect on that statement. The point is that it is very difficult to achieve that kind of change. Getting that change is also not really an option.

The fact is that the only option aside from leaving an appointed upper house, which simply reflects the partisan interests of either the government of the day or the government of recent memory, is a pretty undesirable alternative to any kind of reform whatsoever. I do not think that is the approach we ought to take.

The hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville said that the Senate has only blocked seven bills since 1945 and warned against the danger of it blocking bills. I would just ask this question. Surely no one will argue that the House of Commons and Senate together have not passed more than seven bad acts of Parliament since 1945? Surely there have been things that should have been stopped in the Senate.

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Surely the point of having checks and balances, which is a principle in our government, a principle in the government of all those other federations, and indeed in any civilized government, is something we ought to be protecting and honouring. This means that certain decisions that I personally would like to see would be blocked by an elected Senate, and also some that I would like to see stopped.

In general, the search for a greater consensus, something that does not simply reflect the will of a mandate achieved at one instant in time on election day in a certain election, is a worthwhile endeavour.

On that basis alone, it is absolutely vital we have a Senate that can be effective, as our Senate currently and most emphatically is not.

I mentioned a bit about the Frankenstein's monster argument that was presented by the member for Hamilton Centre. After he made his comments in response to my question, he noted that the multi-member proportional system, which has multiple mandates, is one that is precedented, it exists elsewhere, unlike the idea that an upper house has multiple types of mandates.

In fact, that is actually not correct. The Swiss upper house has multiple types of mandates. The members sent from different cantons are elected by different methods. They are elected by *Landsgemeinde*, an assembly of all the citizens in some of the so-called mountain cantons in the eastern part of the country. They are elected by different systems elsewhere. That is the decision of the individual canton.

There is a system that exists, and has been in existence for many years, quite successfully with more than one kind of mandate. In fact, if one looks around, they can discover that there are many legislatures in many parts of the world where multiple mandates are used. I think one should be careful about these things. One does not want to overdo it.

I point out that in this case what is being proposed is simply a method for transitioning out of the status quo where some people were appointed after 2008, promising to serve a mixed mandate, others where appointed before that time, having made no such promise, and those coming in after the passage of this amendment to the Constitution would be under a third system.

In the long run, there would one type of mandate for everybody. We are simply going through a transition process, and not one that I think would be damaging.

I also want to deal with the suggestion made by the member for Hamilton Centre that this is in some respect undemocratic. The whole point of this is to be democratic. His argument was that a prime minister might not recommend the individual who won an election. Let us remember the relevant part of the act, which I read to everybody, and I will read it again:

If a province or territory has enacted legislation that is substantially in accordance with the framework set out in the schedule, the Prime Minister, in recommending Senate nominees to the Governor General, must consider names from the most current list of Senate nominees selected for that province or territory.

• (1340)

It is binding on the Prime Minister. In true theory it is not binding upon the Governor General.

I think the point the member was making, and he will be able to reiterate that point if I do not get it correct, was that a prime minister might simply ignore this advice. The fact is that there is no penalty in the bill for doing so. Therefore, I see his point.

I would point out that in the discussions that took place for the parallel piece of legislation on Senate reform proposed in the 39th Parliament, the opposite objection was made by a number of witnesses. They said that the problem was that we would be establishing a convention which would become too firmly rooted and that the Prime Minister would, regardless of what objections he might have, be forced to follow the advice by the enormous political pressure. The argument then went on that this convention would cause this to be a *de facto* power of appointment being given to the people and that would mean the Governor General would lose his independent ability to appoint the senators and therefore it would be unconstitutional.

I will not go into the absurdity of that argument, although it was absurd, but I will point out that the feeling was very much the opposite. Therefore, the member's fears might be allayed by reviewing some of the testimony from that committee.

I would also point out the fact that there is an historical example we can draw upon. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney stated that until the Meech Lake accord was enacted into law, and at which point the Senate would be elected using a new set of mandates, he would accept senators appointed by provincial governments.

Therefore, in 1989 the legislative assembly of Alberta held an election for the Senate and General Stan Waters won it. His name was then presented to the prime minister who was very resistant. He tried to wiggle out of making that appointment, but in the end the heat was too great and he appointed Senator Waters to the upper House, where he served very well. Unfortunately it was not very long because he passed away as a result of cancer a couple of years later.

There is a precedent which indicates that prime ministers will have a very tough time ignoring who and what people choose.

Our whole system is based upon constitutional conventions. Our entire Canadian political system and its British ancestor are based upon the idea of conventions. On paper, the Governor General has an independent power with regard to the appointment of senators. On paper, the Monarch has tremendous arbitrary powers. In practice, a person not even mentioned in the Constitution, the prime minister, has most of those powers and exercises them via the House of Commons. In practice, we have responsible government, something which is absolutely responsible to the House of Commons and is absolutely not written down anywhere in the Constitution.

These rules are absolutely binding. They are not legal rules; they are constitutional rules. Those who would dream of trying to ignore them would do so at the cost of their political career.

I suggest that much the same dynamic would be at work with regard to the Prime Minister following the letter of this law and making a recommendation to the Governor General as to the appointment of senators who come from that provincial list.

Government Orders

There is no question that prime ministers in the end would lose the power they have to appoint partisans or people of their choice and would be forced to follow the will of the people of the relevant province. That would be a very good thing.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Madam Speaker, I found the speech given by the hon. member across the floor rather incoherent, especially when it comes to giving powers to the provinces. The bill supposes that the provinces could, at their expense, hold elections to elect senators, but it very clearly states that the Prime Minister would not be obliged to accept those elections or that choice of senators. Where is the democracy in this bill?

Also, the member across the way added that it would be unconstitutional to give these powers to the provinces. What do the Conservatives ultimately want from this bill? Do they want to give powers to the provinces or not? Where is the democracy in that?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, we want to give powers to Canadians, in their respective provinces. Regarding the issue of democracy, the prime minister is obliged to accept the decisions of the voters in the provinces. To quote the bill:

If a province or territory has enacted legislation that is substantially in accordance with the framework set out in the schedule, the Prime Minister, in recommending Senate nominees to the Governor General, must consider names from the most current list of Senate nominees selected for that province or territory.

[English]

L'hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for his very thoughtful and personal speech. It is a refreshing change from the kind of canned speeches read for the first time by so many of his colleagues in his party. He came with something personal and I hope it will stay this way. I hope that he will not one day come in repeating slogans as if he were unable to come up with his own personal view.

However, he made some comments that were in contradiction to what the minister and some of his colleagues have said. For example, he said that, yes, the bill would be unfair for some provinces. It is a fact and he does not say that it is not true. However, he thinks that there will have enough goodwill elsewhere in the country to address these issues *une fois que le mal sera fait*, once the wrong is done, and that this goodwill will come from other provinces.

In to order to justify the bill, the member is saying that we should not to worry, that we will have a constitutional negotiation after writ. Therefore, the constitutional nightmare his colleague spoke of before, he is hoping for it. That is what he said. I think that is a very dangerous contradiction within the Conservative Party and he will need to explain that to Canadians.

Do Canadians want a constitutional fix after the wrong the government would have made for the whole country, especially for British Columbia and Alberta?

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, it would be truer to say that what I said was that it was not that the bill was unfair, but rather that it does not deal with one of the issues that confronts us today, and that is absolutely true.

I would be willing to do this sort of thing, but whether there is a national willingness is not for me to decide. Whether the nation says that it is satisfied with the way things are is not for me to decide.

I would point out the goal of the original Confederation deal on the subject of Senate representation. There was no illusion at the time that we were trying to achieve representation by population in the Upper House, quite the contrary. Nor was there the goal to achieve what the Americans had done, which was equal representation for each of the states. The goal was to achieve equal representation for each of the regions. At that time, we perceived Canada as consisting of three regions: Quebec, Ontario and the Maritime provinces. The west was contemplated but did not come in. When it did, a change was made to the Constitution to allow for equal representation for the western region. That regional principle of representation inequality, more or less, stays in place.

There is a separate issue one could point to. There are 24 senators for each region except for the Atlantic region, which is, population wise, less than half the size of the next region, and yet it has seven extra senators because Newfoundland entered in and was given extra senators.

These are things I genuinely do think can be dealt with by means of goodwill. I do not lose faith in the goodwill of all members, both people in the regions that are under-represented and understand that is not the end of the world, and those who are in the over-represented regions who have a sense that we might want to make corrections. However, I leave that to them. I should not be making decisions on their behalf.

• (1350)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for taking the time to listen to my remarks and include them in his responses. It is enjoyable debating with that parliamentarian at committee.

The member commented that the Prime Minister would consider that if it became a convention it would, therefore, have the effect of law. However, that takes time. My point is that the Prime Minister violated his own law in the same Parliament that he brought it into. Therefore, it is quite possible that we may never get enough time to have a convention.

He mentioned Sweden, which was an excellent answer. My response is that, again, it is a recognized model. It may be unique but it is a model. What we have in the Senate, by virtue of what is being proposed here, is not a model, it is a mishmash of things that were hangers on before; new immediate short-term fixes. I mean, it is just a patchwork and that is why I used the Frankenstein example.

The member mentioned deliberately built multiple mandates. Again, when it is a deliberate mandate that is built-in, that is a lot different than saying that we need to leave this piece here because we have people appointed for that length of time and we need to put this piece in here to cover that. There is a huge difference.

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I will come back to the point that was just made about the regions. The member said that we do not deal with regional fairness. That is quite true. The member prides himself in being intellectually honest and, for the most part, I believe he is, but could he please comment on, or however he wants to skate over this, how this bill would entrench the serious problems that are being referenced not only in Alberta and B.C. but also the eastern provinces and the northern part of our country?

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I also I enjoy debating with the member at committee. He is always a gentleman and very fair-minded. While we honour all colleagues, perhaps they are not all equally fair-minded in the proceedings of the House. I appreciate that from him and from the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville too.

I think the member was inadvertent in referencing Sweden. I was actually referring to Switzerland.

The more substantive issue he pointed out was he continued to say that we have a model here that is a mishmash. I would suggest another word. I would suggest the word “transition”. I want to point out that we would not be the first country to face this kind of problem.

When the senate was being set up in the United States following the 1787 constitutional convention, there was a basic problem. Its senate was to consist of members, all whom would have six-year terms, but some of whom would have their six-year term expire six years from then and others would have it expire only four years into the future within a de facto four-year term, and some of whom would have only a two-year term. This was a problem. Every state wanted to have one of the four-year and one of the six-year senators and every candidate for the senate wanted to be one of the four or six-year senators. No one wanted to be a two-year senator. This was a short-term political problem and it did not prevent it from functioning as a very august institution and to grow in depth with time.

As well, I should mention that when the U.S. senate in the early part of the 20th century, exactly 100 years ago, was in transition from being an appointed body to being an elected body, what happened was initially one state, the state of Oregon, started electing its senators. That practice gradually spread, first through the west and, within a few years, an amendment was passed to the constitution, I believe it was the 17th amendment, that called for all senators to be elected. But again, there was a transition that lasted about a decade. It did not cause, as far as I am aware, any catastrophic problems.

The member had one last question, which was the one he was most vexed about, but it has slipped my mind of what it was.

• (1355)

Mr. David Christopherson: Regions.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you, regional representation. As I mentioned, if there is a national desire to have a discussion on that point, then that discussion would occur, but I do not think that should keep us from having a discussion on this point.

I will ask my Alberta and British Columbia colleagues this question. Would they prefer being represented by six unelected senators or six elected senators?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

I recognize that it is a privilege to have the opportunity to address the House today. This is a privilege granted to me by the democratic principles of our country. Based on the supremacy of the rule of law, Canadian parliamentary institutions recognize this fact and often serve as an example throughout the world. Whether it be our Supreme Court, our Constitution or the House of Commons, the international news constantly reminds us that it would be very dangerous to take our democratic institutions for granted or to simply handle government business in a manner that is inconsistent with the most basic parliamentary rules.

This opportunity to speak about Bill C-7 is an opportunity to express my concern about the profound changes that this government wants to make to Canadian parliamentary institutions and, in particular, about the questionable manner in which it intends to go about doing so.

First, I would like to draw the House's attention to one thing, and that is the purely cosmetic nature of this bill. It is like a face lift that merely serves to superficially hide the signs of aging. This proposed Senate reform does not do much to hide the wrinkles. It is what I would call botched surgery. This bill does not address the real problems with the Senate.

First, this government is not above the laws, and certainly not above our Constitution. How does the Conservative government plan to justify the fact that it is blatantly thumbing its nose at the most basic rules of our state? In the preamble of the legislation, the government says it plans to use section 44, which, subject to sections 41 and 42, allows Parliament to make an ordinary law to change the way senators are appointed. This move would very clearly violate subsection 42(1) of our Constitution, which states:

An amendment to the Constitution of Canada in relation to the following matters may be made only in accordance with subsection 38(1)...

The Constitution unequivocally states that the powers of the Senate and the method of selecting senators cannot be changed without the consent of seven provinces representing at least 50% of the population of Canada.

This provision is in the Constitution in black and white. How does the minister justify ignoring it? If the government wants to reform the Senate, it must do so in accordance with the rules that have been established.

The government is saying that the scope of section 44 covers everything else, including, it says, what it is trying to do with this bill. This argument does not hold water, given the name of the bill: Bill C-7, An Act respecting the selection of senators and amending the Constitution Act, 1867 in respect of Senate term limits. That kind of language cannot go unnoticed. I urge the government to honour the procedure for amending the Constitution.

Government Orders

I would like to add something here. I took a look at the government's previous Senate reform bill, Bill C-20. It was very interesting. In the preamble, it states quite clearly that the reform based on consultative elections was to be a transition process that would lead to a more permanent constitutional reform of the Senate to provide for a means of direct election. This statement, which is quite significant, does not appear in Bill C-7. This is yet more proof of the superficial nature of this bill. This is all that the majority government plans to bring to Senate reform. It is amazing that this is being used for political gains.

This government feels justified in using an undemocratic method to make an antiquated institution that is ill-suited to modern political realities more democratic. All I am seeing here is another attempt by this government to unilaterally move forward with institutional reform in the least collegial and transparent way possible. What is more, the government is saying that this is all there will be in the way of Senate reform. What a lost opportunity.

Flouting the process for amending the constitution would create a dangerous constitutional precedent. Is this the historic legacy this government wishes to leave? I would like to take this opportunity to say that the New Democratic Party will always defend the rule of law and stand up for healthy, friendly and constructive debate on the future of this country and the issues that directly affect Canadians. No government can avoid meeting this country's constitutional obligations. No government can do that.

I do not think it could be any clearer that the use of section 44 is a way to avoid debate and especially to avoid obtaining the consent of the provinces, which are also concerned about these changes. By proceeding in such a unilateral way, the bill sends an ambiguous and underhanded message to the provinces. Last I heard, they were an integral part of this country. Is this government afraid that this reform bill will not obtain the required consent? This kind of attitude tells me that the government is incapable of generating the support it needs to make these reforms. This bill, in its current form, is an excellent way of short-circuiting the provinces' opinions.

● (1400)

The provinces that had an upper chamber in their own legislature abolished it a long time ago. Furthermore, a number of provincial premiers have opposed this unilateral reform. It is blatantly obvious that the government is saying, "You do not agree with us? Oh well, too bad for you. Our mandate is too strong for us to worry about you. Here are the wonders of Canadian constitutional law, covered in Conservative sauce." What a fabulous message to send to Canadian citizens. Does that really represent the actions of a responsible majority government that claims to work for all Canadians?

The role of the Senate has been controversial since the early days of Confederation. If I may, I remind the House that the Senate, as an institution, was meant to be a chamber of sober second thought, a chamber of wise people chosen to represent the territorial diversity of the country and act as a counterbalance to the decisions made in the House of Commons. Today, the makeup of cabinet reflects one of the requirements for regional representation, which was previously a responsibility of the Senate. The role of the Senate has increasingly weakened since it was created at the time of Confederation.

Above all, the Senate must be absolutely devoid of partisanship. I am in no way questioning the wisdom of the current senators. However, it is clear that the Senate has never consistently attained the other objectives laid out for it. Territorial representation, a concern at a time when it took several days to reach the federal capital, is no longer relevant and does not protect remote regions. The Senate rarely opposes the decisions made by the House of Commons. When it does, it hinders the proper functioning of the democratic process. The perception of voters is not that the Senate is a chamber of sober second thought, but that it is the chamber where bills that are too controversial remain in limbo. Finally, and this is the key point, Senate partisanship is legendary. That is the greatest complaint about the Senate. Far from correcting the situation, Bill C-7 will only make things worse.

To get an idea of its partisan nature, we need only watch the news. My colleague from Winnipeg Centre recently gave an interview in which he criticized the involvement of a Conservative senator who was serving as the election campaign co-chair and leading spokesperson for the Manitoba Conservative Party. It is clearly unacceptable for a member of the Senate, who is paid by taxpayers, to use his time for that purpose. If he wishes to get involved in the Manitoba election campaign, he should never do so at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. This example highlights how the Senate, in its current form, is poisoned by partisanship.

Canadians expect the Senate to act as independently as possible. Can the minister clearly tell this chamber that reforming the way senators are selected—by adding an election process—will make the Senate less partisan? No, I do not think he can, unless the minister outright contradicts a Progressive Conservative senator who told the *Hill Times* last June that Bill C-7 could be a threat to the Canadian parliamentary system. He maintained that the proposed reforms could politicize the Senate even further instead of making it free of partisanship. He also stated that a senator is more effective when there is no partisanship.

What more is there to say? This bill would clearly exacerbate the partisanship that is already all too prominent in the Senate. How can this bill possibly be described as an improvement to the democratic legitimacy of the Senate? The proposed nature of the method of selecting senators would poison the Senate's mandate, which is supposed to be as independent as possible. If we look closely at the government's line of thinking, there would be a huge divide among senators appointed before October 14, 2008, and those appointed after. How will these new, elected senators with fixed terms serve alongside senators who were appointed without any fixed terms? How will Canadians perceive this dual reality?

Government Orders

On that topic, I have a few questions I would like to raise. Approximately 60% of the current senators were appointed before October 14, 2008. This means that they would be able to fulfill their senatorial duty and enjoy the generous privileges of their position until the age of 75. The coexistence of the former kind of senators with the new kind of senators would go on for several years, perhaps even decades. Consider the example of a senator who still has 35 years of service ahead of him. How would the legitimacy of the former kind of appointed senator compare to that of the new senators with a fresh mandate from the electorate? The legislative process and the reputation of the Senate would definitely be undermined. This simply does not fit in with the vision of an independent Senate whose mandate is to remain as impartial as possible.

The *Hill Times* tried to contact the 37 senators currently serving who were appointed by the Prime Minister after October 14, 2008, and they received very few responses.

● (1405)

Most of them declined commenting or simply did not respond. There is not even a semblance of unity on this bill from Conservative senators. If their own senators do not support it, it is the ultimate insult to present it to this House. How can this government claim that its Senate reforms are based on increasing its democratic legitimacy? This same government did not hesitate a single second to appoint three candidates from its own party who were defeated in the last election. That is an insult to the intelligence of Canadians who clearly expressed their free and democratic choice.

If this government truly had the intention of reforming the upper chamber, as it has been claiming for a long time now, it would have avoided this unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour. This is yet more evidence of a consistently applied double standard: one policy for friends of the Conservatives, another policy for other Canadians. That is the reality of this government's policy. I doubt that the public takes this lack of respect for their democratic choices lightly. There are strong mandates, and then there are brutal mandates.

There are some aspects of this bill that are worth special attention. Unless they are declared as independents, provincial candidates for the Senate will be free to associate themselves with a political party during their election campaign. If the minister is hoping to cut down on the politicization of the work of the upper chamber through this initiative, I think he has misunderstood the role of the Senate, which is to protect regional, provincial and minority interests, while acting as a chamber of sober second thought to examine legislation in greater detail.

It all comes down to the same thing. How can this government say that greater politicization of the Senate could help deliver this mandate? And how does it reconcile overstepping the opinions of the provinces on this, when the mandate of the Senate is partially entrusted to them in order to balance representation within Confederation? Political party affiliation has a major influence on the work of the Senate. Through this bill the minister is proposing to increase the number of partisan battles by renewing the contingent of senators from each province every nine years.

By introducing a non-renewable term, the reform also denies Canadians an opportunity to reward the work of an elected Senator. If the senator is doing good work, he or she will not be able to

continue and the voters will not have a chance to show their appreciation through a re-election. If, on the other hand, the senator is doing mediocre work, voters will not be able to punish his or her incompetence and the senator will leave when the nine-year term is up. Either way, citizens are denied their say in the matter. One of the fundamental principles of democracy currently seriously lacking in the Senate is accountability and this reform is devoid of it as well. This principle is working quite well in the House of Commons and it forces us to give the best of ourselves.

Again, this government does not know what it wants. It is trying to achieve a number of objectives without any real focus. This bill would give us a partially elected Senate that, according to the government, is more democratic by virtue of repeated partisan elections for a non-renewable and non-punishable term. Where I come from, we call that hogwash.

These things cannot be reconciled with the mandate of the Senate, as I was saying earlier. Allow me again to read part of the preamble to Bill C-7, which states that "Parliament wishes to maintain the essential characteristics of the Senate within Canada's parliamentary democracy as a chamber of independent, sober second thought". I do not think partisanship will create a climate for independent, sober second thought within the Senate. Just look at the climate in this House to see what I mean by that.

The objective of the bill contradicts its actual effects. The government must decide whether it wants to respect the historical mandate of the Senate or whether it wants to make the Senate more democratically legitimate through partisan elections. Regardless, it is inconceivable that the government would introduce this bill to the Canadian public and insist that these two goals are compatible. Frankly, such vague legislation should not be introduced. But perhaps the government is sacrificing finesse for strength.

I was also distressed to notice that the bill, vaguely and without explanation, shifts the responsibility for holding elections to select Senate candidates. Under the bill, Senate candidates would be elected during provincial elections, on a date to be determined by the lieutenant governor, or during municipal elections. Dumping this responsibility seems like a disorganized and very imprecise way of improving the Senate's democratic legitimacy. The government could have taken the time to draft a clear, detailed and intelligible bill, but instead, Bill C-7 is terribly unclear and illogical. For example, when Canadians choose their candidates during an election, they will not even be certain that the one they choose will sit in the Senate. The final choice will remain in the hands of the Prime Minister since the bill imposes no obligation.

● (1410)

I mentioned that this reform seems to be purely cosmetic and here is the evidence. Parliamentary institutions deserve a little more respect and rigour. Unfortunately, when I look at this bill, the public's cynicism about politicians seems justified to me. Nothing now guarantees that this government will take its reform of the Senate any further.

Government Orders

In addition to this important point, we must also consider the costs of this reform. However, Bill C-7 does not make any mention of these costs. As further proof of how vague this legislation is, the bill does not clearly set out which level of government will have to assume the new costs. In these uncertain economic times, the government is adding new costs without having analyzed the proposed reforms to determine how useful they actually are.

Senate elections would thus become a federal, provincial, or municipal matter. Nothing is clear because the bill allows for all three scenarios. How will expenses be shared in these even more complex elections? Moreover, this new use of public money will contribute nothing to democracy. Canadians have long questioned the usefulness of the Senate. I doubt that the public will find the Senate more attractive if it becomes more expensive. In other words, we do not know “when?” or “how?”, and especially not “how much?”. Would it not be preferable to reform the Senate by passing bills that have more substance than grey areas? Is that asking too much of the government?

These are the indicators of a sloppy bill that takes too simplistic an approach to the parliamentary institutions of this country. I am disappointed if this is all that this government can add to the debate on Senate reform. The regions, provinces and minorities of Canada are again left hanging and will continue to be represented by an upper chamber that is completely disconnected from contemporary reality.

This bill, in addition to moving ahead in a manner that is, at a minimum, constitutionally suspect, only masks the problem of the democratic legitimacy of the Senate, without undertaking the mandatory and necessary consultation of the provinces of this country and, above all, without considering what mandate Canadians realistically want an upper chamber to have. The message to the provinces is as follows: this government does not need to consult you to proceed unilaterally with constitutional amendments. The message to Canadians is that this government is not listening to them. Its mandate is too strong for it to worry about them, especially when they indicate their preferences in a general election.

My colleagues are certainly aware of all the attempts made to reform the Senate since its inception. These attempts all have one thing in common: they failed. In the past 100 years, 13 attempts have failed and, today, given the lack of provincial interest and the absence of a consensus on the nature of the reform, there is every indication that this bill will be added to that historic list of failed attempts.

The reality is that the Senate is a problem that no one has been able to fix. So, as our party is suggesting, it is time to consider another option that has yet to be explored—abolishing the Senate. That is why are proposing that we consult people about this, to see if they believe that the upper chamber still has a place in our democratic institutions. We want to ask them if they feel this legacy from the 19th century still has a place in a 21st century democracy. The provinces that abolished their senates did not stop functioning. Countries like Denmark and New Zealand abolished their senates and continue to operate without any problem.

Yes, I am critical of this bill, but the official opposition will not be content with simply criticizing in a stubborn and narrow-minded

fashion. The opposition will do everything it can to propose well-thought-out and reasonable solutions for the good of Canadians. Our parliamentary institutions deserve more of our time and intellectual rigour. That is why I insist that when difficult issues such as Senate reform are brought before the House for debate, we should be discussing the option of abolishing the Senate and presenting that to the Canadian public as well. That is the spirit of what I consider to be constructive and respectful debate.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her very interesting speech. I would like to ask her about the solution recommended by her party, that is, to hold a nation-wide referendum on abolishing the Senate.

Would the question read, “Are you in favour of abolishing the Senate?”

This question is problematic. Perhaps the majority of Canadians simply want Senate reform. But if they are forced to choose between abolishing it or keeping it as is, they may vote to abolish it, even if that is not their first choice. Thus, it would be a complex question to ask in a referendum, because Senate reform could be done in many ways. It could be done badly, as we are seeing here today, or it could be done in a way that is much better for Canadians.

Therefore, in my opinion, it is not suitable for a referendum for that very reason. But there is another reason. Let us suppose that the majority of Canadians say “yes” to abolishing the Senate, but a few provinces say “no” and want to keep the Senate, including, for example, Prince Edward Island, which is guaranteed four senators in the Constitution. Does the member believe that the premiers of those provinces—Prince Edward Island or others—would be forced to say, against the majority vote of their respective provinces, that they will agree to abolish the Senate? For if all premiers do not give their consent, it cannot be abolished, since the provinces’ decision must be unanimous. So does she not see that her plan for a referendum on this issue, which on the surface appears very tempting, raises many problems?

• (1415)

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

In terms of the referendum question in this context, my colleague is acutely aware that it is very difficult to ask a very clear question in a referendum. Everyone agrees on that.

I agree with him when he says that presenting just one question that asks whether the Senate should be maintained or abolished does not cover all the possible options. In a similar way, the government is simply presenting Parliament with a reform, saying that people agree on having a reform. In fact, all people are saying is that they do not agree with the status quo. It is intellectually dishonest because we do not know whether people truly agree with the reform or whether they simply no longer want the status quo. It is important to verify what people really want and get their approval.

Government Orders

In terms of unanimous agreement among the provinces, discussions will have to be held and a consensus reached. What is being proposed is not simply to abolish the Senate without consideration and keep this Parliament the way it is. We would like to seek different representation in Parliament that could compensate for the fact that the Senate would no longer be there to represent the regions.

We could seek the unanimous consent of the provinces to a proposal for real democratic reform of our parliamentary institutions.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unless I am mistaken, I think it was the member for Ottawa—Orléans who was recognized, not the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

I would like to hear the hon. member's opinion on the two choices before her now: the status quo in the Senate—where there are senators who have potentially been appointed for 45 years—or a Senate with shorter terms.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Madam Speaker, the problem is that they have tabled this bill, saying that it will be more democratic and will improve the situation. In reality, this bill will not fix the problems inherent in the Senate, such as partisanship and a lack of regional representation. It is not true that senators represent regions; it is simply partisan. This reform bill is being presented as an improvement to democracy and as an accountability measure, but I do not agree with that. I cannot accept the reform as it stands.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are trying to find some logic in this whole thing. We have heard from colleagues with constitutional backgrounds on both sides of the House, and yet we still cannot make any sense of it.

I am wondering if this move is not a way for the Conservative Party to prepare for a time when the tide starts to turn against them. By keeping the Senate and stacking it in their favour, they are ensuring that they will be able to pursue their agenda in the future and that Parliament would not be able to go back and change things. Does my colleague get the same impression?

● (1420)

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. It would indeed be a dangerous precedent to allow such amendments that are so close to being constitutional. This is an extremely sensitive issue. Making these amendments without any consultation would set a very dangerous precedent of completely unilateral constitutional amendments.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the NDP member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for her very detailed and interesting speech. However, I must say that I was very disappointed when she proposed a constitutional dialogue on abolishing the Senate rather than a consultation with the provinces to see how we could improve the Senate. Abolishing the Senate is a major debate.

Does the hon. member think that this would be an effective use of our time during this period of economic uncertainty in our country and the world? Is it a priority for the Canadian public, the provinces and the members of the House to start a constitutional debate at this time?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Madam Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the hon. member for her question. In fact, it is the government that introduced this bill on Senate reform in the House. I do not know if it is a top priority to reform the Senate or reopen the Constitution, but it was the government that introduced the bill before us today.

Personally, I believe that it is not worth reforming the Senate in this manner without having consulted the provinces and the public. When we talk about some form of abolition, we are not talking about simply abolishing the Senate. We will have to really reform our parliamentary institutions so that they are more representative of everyone in Canada. It would be possible to seek a consensus and see what the public thinks.

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent provided an excellent analysis and a great speech outlining the problems with the bill. She actively put forward what we as the official opposition believe should be happening.

One of the things that those members over there pride themselves on is the sober second thought. The member made reference to many of them toeing the line. There might be one person here who ran as an independent and was elected as an independent, but I do not think so.

Therefore, given that most of the new senators would likely be partisans elected under the new legislation, would the hon. member expect more partisan toeing of the line or less as a result of senators being elected on the party ticket?

● (1425)

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Madam Speaker, it is fairly clear that organizing partisan elections with partisan confrontation will serve only to further increase the partisanship that already plays a major role in the Senate and makes its mandate even more difficult to carry out.

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill C-7, Senate Reform Act.

In our platform and in the Speech from the Throne, we outlined our commitment to Senate reform, promising Canadians that we would take action. With the introduction of the Senate reform act, we are taking the first steps toward meeting this objective.

Calls for Senate reform are not new. Senate reform has been a part of the political discussion for nearly as long as there has been a Senate. In fact, within two years of the founding of Canada in 1867, arguments for reform began to surface.

In all the studies and reports on Senate reform that have been completed, a common theme has emerged. The studies concluded that while the Senate is a valuable part of our democratic institutions, the status quo is no longer acceptable. Reform is required.

Government Orders

Canadians have overwhelmingly indicated that they feel the same way. They want to see action on Senate reform. In a recent poll released in July this year, 70% of respondents indicated support for Senate reform. Despite the countless calls for reform and citizen dissatisfaction with the Senate, it has survived virtually unchanged in its fundamental features since Confederation. In part, this situation exists because fundamental reform of the Senate requires the support of the provinces, which has been difficult to achieve.

In order to build support for fundamental reform, our government has been pursuing an incremental approach to reform that falls within the federal government's legislative jurisdiction. One of the most pressing concerns about the Senate is that it has no democratic mandate from the citizens it serves, and the current rules allow individuals to stay in their positions for as long as 45 years.

The fact that Senators are not accountable to Canadians contributes to a perception that the Senate lacks legitimacy. That is why we introduced the Senate reform act. The act proposes measures that will give Canadians the opportunity to have a say in who represents them in the Senate. It will also limit the terms of senators to nine years.

The changes proposed in the Senate reform act do not purport to completely resolve the debate over Senate reform. It is our hope that these reforms, once implemented, will be the first step down a path toward more fundamental changes.

Before continuing, it is important to outline, briefly, the elements of the bill. Let me first present the issue of the selection of Senate nominees. The Senate reform act encourages but does not compel provinces and territories to establish democratic consultative processes to give citizens a say in who represents them in the Senate.

The bill then requires the Prime Minister to consider the names of these individuals selected as a result of these processes when making recommendations to the Governor General on Senate appointments.

The Prime Minister has always been clear that his preference is to appoint senators chosen by the voters, and he is committed to respecting results of any democratic consultation with voters. However, the act does not bind the Prime Minister nor the Governor General when making appointments to the Senate. It does not change

the method of selecting senators, and therefore does not require a constitutional amendment.

To assist provinces and territories in establishing their consultations, a voluntary framework is attached as a schedule to the act which provides guidance and direction on consultations. Again, I stress the framework is voluntary. Provinces and territories would not be required to adopt the framework word for word. In fact, they are expected to adapt the framework to suit their unique circumstances and culture.

The framework is simply meant to be a tool to facilitate the implementation of the consultative process. At the end of the day there is only one requirement related to any consultative process that is established. Senate nominees must be selected as a result of a democratic consultation with citizens.

The act illustrates our government's support for the development of consultative processes with the provinces and territories. It is our hope that all provinces and territories will take advantage of this support and help to create a more democratic Senate with enhanced legitimacy.

The Senate reform act will also introduce term limits for senators. The act will restrict the length of time that senators can sit in the Senate to nine years. This would apply to all senators appointed after the royal assent of the bill. It would also apply to current senators appointed after October 2008 whose terms would end nine years after royal assent.

● (1430)

We believe that nine-year terms provide enough time to enable individual senators to gain the experience necessary to carry out their legislative functions while also ensuring regular renewal of the upper chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary. She may pursue her comments when this debate resumes.

It being 2:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

APPENDIX

**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS WITH THEIR
CONSTITUENCIES, PROVINCE OF CONSTITUENCY
AND POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS;
COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE,
THE MINISTRY AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**

CHAIR OCCUPANTS

The Speaker

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

The Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole

MS. DENISE SAVOIE

The Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. BARRY DEVOLIN

The Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. BRUCE STANTON

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

MS. CHRIS CHARLTON

MS. JUDY FOOTE

HON. ROB MERRIFIELD

MR. THOMAS MULCAIR

HON. GORDON O'CONNOR

HON. PETER VAN LOAN

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	Alberta	CPC
Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	Ontario	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	Ontario	CPC
Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	Nunavut	Nunavut	CPC
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	British Columbia	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	Ontario	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	Ontario	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	Ontario	NDP
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	New Brunswick	CPC
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	Ontario	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	Ontario	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	Alberta	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	Alberta	CPC
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	Saskatchewan	CPC
Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	Ontario	NDP
Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester— Musquodoboit Valley	Nova Scotia	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	New Brunswick	CPC
Ashton, Niki	Churchill	Manitoba	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	Ontario	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	British Columbia	NDP
Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	Québec	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	Québec	NDP
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	Ontario	CPC
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	Manitoba	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Ontario	Lib.
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	Québec	BQ
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Ontario	Lib.
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	Alberta	CPC
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	Québec	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	Québec	CPC
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	Northwest Territories	NDP
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	Manitoba	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	Québec	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	Québec	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	Québec	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	Saskatchewan	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Boivin, Françoise.....	Gatineau	Québec	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	Québec	NDP
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	Saskatchewan	CPC
Boulerice, Alexandre.....	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie....	Québec	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine.....	Hochelaga	Québec	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean.....	Québec	NDP
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	Ontario	CPC
Breitreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	Saskatchewan	CPC
Brisson, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Nova Scotia.....	Lib.
Brosseau, Ruth Ellen.....	Berthier—Maskinongé.....	Québec	NDP
Brown, Gordon.....	Leeds—Grenville	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora.....	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	Ontario	CPC
Bruinooze, Rod	Winnipeg South	Manitoba	CPC
Butt, Brad.....	Mississauga—Streetsville.....	Ontario	CPC
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	Lib.
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	Ontario	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	Alberta	CPC
Cannan, Ron.....	Kelowna—Lake Country	British Columbia	CPC
Carmichael, John.....	Don Valley West	Ontario	CPC
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	Québec	NDP
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.....	Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Prince Edward Island....	Lib.
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	Ontario	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	Ontario	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant..	Québec	NDP
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	Nova Scotia.....	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu.....	Pickering—Scarborough East ..	Ontario	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	Ontario	CPC
Choquette, François	Drummond	Québec	NDP
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	Ontario	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	Ontario	NDP
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.....	Saskatchewan	CPC
Cleary, Ryan.....	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Ontario	CPC
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Québec	Lib.
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh.....	Ontario	NDP
Côté, Raymond.....	Beauport—Limoilou	Québec	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin.....	Mount Royal	Québec	Lib.
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	British Columbia	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley.....	British Columbia	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger.....	Cape Breton—Canso	Nova Scotia.....	Lib.
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East.....	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	Ontario	CPC
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	British Columbia	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	British Columbia	NDP
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	Québec	NDP
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	Ontario	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	Ontario	CPC
Devolin, Barry, The Acting Speaker	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Ontario	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	Ontario	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Québec	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	Québec	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	British Columbia	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	Québec	NDP
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	Alberta	CPC
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	Québec	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	British Columbia	CPC
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Ontario	Lib.
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	Alberta	NDP
Dusseault, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	Québec	NDP
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	Ontario	CPC
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Associate Minister of National Defence	Vaughan	Ontario	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	British Columbia	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	British Columbia	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	Ontario	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Transport)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	Manitoba	CPC
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	Québec	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	Québec	NDP
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	British Columbia	Lib.
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	Ontario	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Ontario	CPC
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Québec	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	British Columbia	NDP
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	Québec	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	Québec	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Gill, Pam	Brampton—Springdale	Ontario	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	Manitoba	CPC
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	New Brunswick	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	New Brunswick	CPC
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	Alberta	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Saskatchewan	Lib.
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	Ontario	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Ontario	CPC
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la- Chaudière	Québec	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	Ontario	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	British Columbia	CPC
Grogue, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	Québec	NDP
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	Alberta	CPC
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	Ontario	NDP
Harris, Jack	St. John's East	Newfoundland and Labrador	NDP
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	British Columbia	CPC
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	Québec	NDP
Hawn, Hon. Laurie	Edmonton Centre	Alberta	CPC
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock— Cloverdale	British Columbia	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	Alberta	CPC
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	CPC
Hoepfner, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	Manitoba	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	Ontario	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Ontario	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin— Kapuskasing	Ontario	NDP
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Ontario	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	Québec	NDP
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	Ontario	CPC
Jean, Brian	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	Alberta	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	British Columbia	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge— Mission	British Columbia	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Ontario	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Interna- tional Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	Nova Scotia	CPC
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	Ontario	NDP
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	Alberta	CPC
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	Ontario	CPC
Kerr, Greg	West Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed	Souris—Moose Mountain	Saskatchewan	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	Ontario	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Lake, Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry ...	Edmonton—Mill Woods— Beaumont.....	Alberta	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Manitoba	Lib.
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet— Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	Québec	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	Québec	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	Québec	NDP
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Ontario	CPC
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	Québec	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	Québec	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	New Brunswick	Lib.
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	Québec	NDP
Leef, Ryan	Yukon	Yukon	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	Ontario	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	Ontario	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	Nova Scotia	NDP
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	Ontario	CPC
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	Québec	NDP
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	Ontario	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	Ontario	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	Saskatchewan	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	British Columbia	CPC
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave	Oxford	Ontario	CPC
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	Québec	NDP
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	Ontario	NDP
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	Manitoba	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	Ontario	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	Ontario	NDP
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	British Columbia	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	British Columbia	CPC
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Ontario	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	Ontario	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Ontario	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Ontario	Lib.
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson— Cariboo	British Columbia	CPC
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	Ontario	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	Alberta	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	Alberta	CPC
Michaud, Élane	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	Québec	NDP
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Ontario	CPC
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.....	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	British Columbia	CPC
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	Québec	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude.....	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	Québec	NDP
Mourani, Maria.....	Ahuntsic	Québec	BQ
Mulcair, Thomas	Outremont	Québec	NDP
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	British Columbia	Lib.
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher ...	Québec	NDP
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	Ontario	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil-Soulanges	Québec	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	Ontario	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	Ontario	CPC
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval.....	Québec	NDP
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills....	Ontario	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East.....	Alberta	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of International Cooperation	Durham	Ontario	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	Ontario	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	Ontario	CPC
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel ..	Québec	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable.....	Québec	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	Québec	NDP
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	Alberta	CPC
Péclet, Ève.....	La Pointe-de-l'Île.....	Québec	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	CPC
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm	Québec	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	Québec	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	Québec	BQ
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	Ontario	CPC
Preston, Joe.....	Elgin—Middlesex—London ...	Ontario	CPC
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	Québec	NDP
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Rafferty, John.....	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	Ontario	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	Ontario	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	Alberta	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	Alberta	CPC
Ravnat, Mathieu.....	Pontiac	Québec	NDP
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	Ontario	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	Alberta	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	Alberta	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	Alberta	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	Ontario	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	Saskatchewan	CPC
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	Québec	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik —Eeyou	Québec	NDP
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	British Columbia	NDP
Savoie, Denise, The Deputy Speaker	Victoria	British Columbia	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	British Columbia	CPC
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Québec	Lib.
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	Saskatchewan	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	Ontario	CPC
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	Ontario	CPC
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	Québec	NDP
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Ontario	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	Prince Edward Island	CPC
Shipley, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Ontario	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	Alberta	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	British Columbia	NDP
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	Ontario	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	Manitoba	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River— Marquette	Manitoba	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	Alberta	CPC
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	Québec	NDP
Stanton, Bruce, The Acting Speaker	Simcoe North	Ontario	CPC
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	British Columbia	NDP
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	Nova Scotia	NDP
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	Alberta	CPC
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	British Columbia	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	Ontario	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas— Flamborough—Westdale	Ontario	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	Ontario	NDP
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	Ontario	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	Manitoba	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	Manitoba	CPC
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tremblay, Jonathan.....	Montmorency—Charlevoix— Haute-Côte-Nord.....	Québec	NDP
Trost, Brad.....	Saskatoon—Humboldt.....	Saskatchewan	CPC
Trottier, Bernard.....	Etobicoke—Lakeshore.....	Ontario	CPC
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Québec	Lib.
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women.....	London North Centre.....	Ontario	CPC
Turmel, Nycole.....	Hull—Aylmer	Québec	NDP
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris.....	Manitoba	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform).....	Edmonton—Sherwood Park....	Alberta	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph.....	Ontario	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex.....	Ontario	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe.....	Ontario	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice.....	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin.....	Saskatchewan	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	Ontario	CPC
Warawa, Mark	Langley	British Columbia	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River.....	Alberta	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex.....	Ontario	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country....	British Columbia	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia.....	British Columbia	CPC
Williamson, John.....	New Brunswick Southwest.....	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	British Columbia	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen.....	Kitchener Centre	Ontario	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversi- fication)	Blackstrap	Saskatchewan	CPC
Young, Terence.....	Oakville.....	Ontario	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South.....	British Columbia	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River...	British Columbia	CPC
VACANCY	Toronto—Danforth.....	Ontario	

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY PROVINCE

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALBERTA (28)		
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	CPC
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	CPC
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	CPC
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	NDP
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	CPC
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	CPC
Hawn, Hon. Laurie	Edmonton Centre	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	CPC
Jean, Brian	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	CPC
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	CPC
Lake, Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	CPC
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	CPC
Richardson, Lee	Calgary Centre	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	CPC
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	CPC
BRITISH COLUMBIA (36)		
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	NDP
Cannan, Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	CPC
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	NDP
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	CPC
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	CPC
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	CPC
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo	CPC
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	CPC
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	Lib.
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	NDP
Savoie, Denise, The Deputy Speaker	Victoria	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	CPC
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	NDP
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	NDP
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	CPC
Warawa, Mark	Langley	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River	CPC

MANITOBA (14)

Ashton, Niki	Churchill	NDP
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	CPC
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	CPC
Bruinooge, Rod	Winnipeg South	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Transport)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	CPC
Hoeppner, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Lib.
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	CPC
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	CPC

NEW BRUNSWICK (10)

Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	Lib.
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest	CPC

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (7)

Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Lib.
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Lib.
Cleary, Ryan	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	NDP
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Lib.
Harris, Jack	St. John's East	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Lib.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (1)

Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	NDP
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NOVA SCOTIA (11)

Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley	CPC
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Lib.
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	CPC
Kerr, Greg	West Nova	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	NDP
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	CPC
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Lib.
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	NDP

NUNAVUT (1)

Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	Nunavut	CPC
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ONTARIO (105)

Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	CPC
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	CPC
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Lib.
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Lib.
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	CPC
Brown, Gordon	Leeds—Grenville	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	CPC
Butt, Brad	Mississauga—Streetsville	CPC
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	CPC
Carmichael, John	Don Valley West	CPC
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Oshawa	CPC
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu	Pickering—Scarborough East	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	CPC
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	CPC
Comartin, Joe	Windsor—Tecumseh	NDP
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East	CPC
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	CPC
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	CPC
Devolin, Barry, The Acting Speaker	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	NDP
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Lib.
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	CPC
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Associate Minister of National Defence	Vaughan	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	CPC
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	CPC
Gill, Parm	Brampton—Springdale	CPC
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	NDP
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	NDP
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	CPC
Holder, Ed.	London West	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusasing	NDP
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Lib.
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	NDP
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	CPC
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	CPC
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	CPC
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave	Oxford	CPC
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	NDP
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Lib.
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	CPC
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	CPC
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	CPC
Oda, Hon. Bev, Minister of International Cooperation	Durham	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	CPC
Poillievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	CPC
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Lib.
Rafferty, John	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	CPC
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	CPC
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	CPC
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Lib.
Shipley, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	CPC
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	NDP
Stanton, Bruce, The Acting Speaker	Simcoe North	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	CPC
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	CPC
VACANCY	Toronto—Danforth	

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (4)

Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Lib.
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Lib.
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	CPC

QUÉBEC (75)

Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	NDP
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	BQ
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	CPC
Boivin, Françoise	Gatineau	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	NDP
Boulerice, Alexandre	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine	Hochelaga	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean	NDP
Brousseau, Ruth Ellen	Berthier—Maskinongé	NDP
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	NDP
Choquette, François	Drummond	NDP
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Lib.
Côté, Raymond	Beauport—Limoilou	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Lib.
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	NDP
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	NDP
Dusseault, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	NDP
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Lib.
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	NDP
Gourde, Jacques, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	CPC
Groguhé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	NDP
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	NDP
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	NDP
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	CPC
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	NDP
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	NDP
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	NDP
Michaud, Élane	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	NDP
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	NDP
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	NDP
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	BQ
Mulcair, Thomas	Outremont	NDP
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil-Soulanges	NDP
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval	NDP
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	NDP
Péclet, Ève	La Pointe-de-l'Île	NDP
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	BQ
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	NDP
Ravignat, Mathieu	Pontiac	NDP
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	NDP
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou	NDP
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Lib.
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	NDP
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	NDP
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	NDP
Tremblay, Jonathan	Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Lib.
Turnmel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	NDP

SASKATCHEWAN (14)

Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	CPC
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	CPC
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Lib.
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed	Souris—Moose Mountain	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	CPC
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	CPC
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification)	Blackstrap	CPC

YUKON (1)

Leef, Ryan	Yukon	CPC
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LIST OF STANDING AND SUB-COMMITTEES

(As of September 30, 2011 — 1st Session, 41st Parliament)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Chair: David Tilson

Vice-Chairs:

Kevin Lamoureux
Jinny Jogindera Sims

Don Davies	Roxanne James	Costas Menegakis	Rathika Sitsabaiesan	(12)
Rick Dykstra	Chungsen Leung	Ted Opitz	John Weston	
Sadia Groguhé				

Associate Members

Eve Adams	Olivia Chow	Ed Komarnicki	Andrew Saxton
Mark Adler	Rob Clarke	Daryl Kramp	Gary Schellenberger
Dan Albas	Joe Daniel	Mike Lake	Kyle Seeback
Harold Albrecht	Patricia Davidson	Guy Lauzon	Bev Shipley
Chris Alexander	Bob Dechert	Ryan Leef	Devinder Shory
Mike Allen	Dean Del Mastro	Kellie Leitch	Joy Smith
Dean Allison	Earl Dreesen	Pierre Lemieux	Robert Sopuck
Stella Ambler	Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay	Wladyslaw Lizon	Kevin Sorenson
Rob Anders	Hedy Fry	Ben Lobb	Brian Storseth
David Anderson	Royal Galipeau	Tom Lukiwski	Mark Strahl
Scott Armstrong	Cheryl Gallant	James Lunney	David Sweet
Jay Aspin	Parm Gill	Dave MacKenzie	Lawrence Toet
Joyce Bateman	Shelly Glover	Colin Mayes	Brad Trost
Leon Benoit	Robert Goguen	Phil McColeman	Bernard Trottier
James Bezan	Peter Goldring	Cathy McLeod	Justin Trudeau
Kelly Block	Jacques Gourde	Rob Merrifield	Susan Truppe
Ray Boughen	Nina Grewal	Larry Miller	Merv Tweed
Peter Braid	Richard Harris	Rob Moore	Dave Van Kesteren
Garry Breitzkreuz	Laurie Hawn	Rick Norlock	Maurice Vellacott
Gordon Brown	Bryan Hayes	Tilly O'Neill Gordon	Mike Wallace
Lois Brown	Russ Hiebert	Deepak Obhrai	Mark Warawa
Patrick Brown	Jim Hillyer	LaVar Payne	Chris Warkentin
Rod Bruinooge	Randy Hoback	Pierre Poilievre	Jeff Watson
Brad Butt	Candice Hoepfner	Joe Preston	Rodney Weston
Paul Calandra	Ed Holder	James Rajotte	David Wilks
Blaine Calkins	Brian Jean	Brent Rathgeber	John Williamson
Ron Cannan	Peter Julian	Scott Reid	Stephen Woodworth
John Carmichael	Randy Kamp	Michelle Rempel	Terence Young
Colin Carrie	Jim Karygiannis	Blake Richards	Wai Young
Corneliu Chisu	Gerald Keddy	Lee Richardson	Bob Zimmer
Michael Chong	Greg Kerr	Greg Rickford	

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Chair: Rodney Weston**Vice-Chairs:**Fin Donnelly
Lawrence MacAulayMike Allen
Ryan Cleary
Patricia DavidsonRosane Doré Lefebvre
Bryan HayesRandy Kamp
Ryan LeefRobert Sopuck
Jonathan Tremblay

(12)

Associate MembersEve Adams
Mark Adler
Dan Albas
Harold Albrecht
Chris Alexander
Dean Allison
Stella Ambler
Rob Anders
David Anderson
Scott Armstrong
Jay Aspin
Joyce Bateman
Leon Benoit
James Bezan
Kelly Block
Ray Boughen
Peter Braid
Garry Breitreuz
Gordon Brown
Lois Brown
Patrick Brown
Rod Bruinooge
Brad Butt
Gerry Byrne
Paul Calandra
Blaine Calkins
Ron Cannan
John Carmichael
Colin Carrie
Corneliu Chisu
Michael Chong
Rob ClarkeRodger Cuzner
Joe Daniel
Bob Dechert
Dean Del Mastro
Earl Dreesen
Rick Dykstra
Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay
Royal Galipeau
Cheryl Gallant
Parm Gill
Shelly Glover
Yvon Godin
Robert Goguen
Peter Goldring
Jacques Gourde
Nina Grewal
Richard Harris
Laurie Hawn
Russ Hiebert
Jim Hillyer
Randy Hoback
Candice Hoeppner
Ed Holder
Roxanne James
Brian Jean
Peter Julian
Gerald Keddy
Greg Kerr
Ed Komarnicki
Daryl Kramp
Mike LakeGuy Lauzon
Kellie Leitch
Pierre Lemieux
Chungsen Leung
Wladyslaw Lizon
Ben Lobb
Tom Lukiwski
James Lunney
Dave MacKenzie
Colin Mayes
Phil McColeman
Cathy McLeod
Costas Menegakis
Rob Merrifield
Larry Miller
Rob Moore
Joyce Murray
Rick Norlock
Tilly O'Neill Gordon
Deepak Obhrai
Ted Opitz
LaVar Payne
Pierre Poilievre
Joe Preston
James Rajotte
Brent Rathgeber
Scott Reid
Michelle Rempel
Blake Richards
Lee Richardson
Greg RickfordAndrew Saxton
Gary Schellenberger
Kyle Seeback
Bev Shipley
Devinder Shory
Joy Smith
Kevin Sorenson
Peter Stoffer
Brian Storseth
Mark Strahl
David Sweet
David Tilson
Lawrence Toet
Philip Toone
Brad Trost
Bernard Trotter
Susan Truppe
Merv Tweed
Dave Van Kesteren
Maurice Vellacott
Mike Wallace
Mark Warawa
Chris Warkentin
Jeff Watson
John Weston
David Wilks
John Williamson
Stephen Woodworth
Terence Young
Wai Young
Bob Zimmer

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Chair:

Pat Martin

Vice-Chairs:John McCallum
Mike WallaceScott Armstrong
Denis Blanchette
Kelly BlockAlexandre Boulerice
Peter BraidRon Cannan
Jacques GourdeIrene Mathysen
Bernard Trottier

(12)

Associate Members

Eve Adams
Mark Adler
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Harold Albrecht
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Gerald Keddy
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Daryl Kramp
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Chungsen Leung
Wladyslaw Lizon
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Devinder Shory
Joy Smith
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Kevin Sorenson
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Mark Strahl
David Sweet
David Tilson
Lawrence Toet
Brad Trost
Susan Truppe
Merv Tweed
Dave Van Kesteren
Maurice Vellacott
Mark Warawa
Chris Warkentin
Jeff Watson
John Weston
Rodney Weston
David Wilks
John Williamson
Stephen Woodworth
Terence Young
Wai Young
Bob Zimmer

HEALTH

Chair: Joy Smith

Vice-Chairs: Libby Davies
Hedy Fry

Kelly Block
Patrick Brown
Colin Carrie

Parm Gill
Dany Morin

Anne Minh-Thu Quach
Djaouida Sellah

Mark Strahl
John Williamson

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Associate Members

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Blaine Calkins
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Corneliu Chisu
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Rob Clarke
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Patricia Davidson

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Dean Del Mastro
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Kirsty Duncan
Rick Dykstra
Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay
Royal Galipeau
Cheryl Gallant
Shelly Glover
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Peter Goldring
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Russ Hiebert
Jim Hillyer
Randy Hoback
Candice Hoeppner
Ed Holder
Carol Hughes
Roxanne James
Brian Jean
Peter Julian
Randy Kamp
Gerald Keddy
Greg Kerr
Ed Komarnicki
Daryl Kramp
Mike Lake
Guy Lauzon

Ryan Leef
Kellie Leitch
Pierre Lemieux
Megan Leslie
Chungsen Leung
Wladyslaw Lizon
Ben Lobb
Tom Lukiwski
James Lunney
Dave MacKenzie
Colin Mayes
Phil McColeman
Cathy McLeod
Costas Menegakis
Rob Merrifield
Larry Miller
Christine Moore
Rob Moore
Rick Norlock
Tilly O'Neill Gordon
Deepak Obhrai
Ted Opitz
LaVar Payne
Manon Perreault
Pierre Poilievre
Joe Preston
James Rajotte
Brent Rathgeber
Scott Reid
Michelle Rempel
Blake Richards
Lee Richardson

Greg Rickford
Andrew Saxton
Gary Schellenberger
Kyle Seeback
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Ms. Eve Adams	to the Minister of Veterans Affairs
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